

**REPORT**  
**ON**  
**A STUDY OF THE RECORD AS TO THE ACTUAL ROUTE**  
**OF**  
**THE 1948 APPALACHIAN TRAIL HIKE OF EARL V. SHAFFER**  
**FROM**  
**MT. OGLETHORPE, GA, TO ROCKFISH GAP, VA**  
**(APRIL 3, 1948 - MAY 19, 1948)**

**by**  
**James W. McNeely**

**APRIL 26, 2011**  
**(PDF VERSION -- MAY 9, 2011)**

**REPORT  
ON  
A STUDY OF THE RECORD OF THE ACTUAL ROUTE  
OF  
THE 1948 APPALACHIAN TRAIL HIKE OF EARL V. SHAFFER  
FROM  
MT. OGLETHORPE, GA, TO ROCKFISH GAP, VA  
(APRIL 3, 1948 - MAY 19, 1948)  
(PDF VERSION)**

---

- TABLE OF CONTENTS -

<b>Heading</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table of Contents	-i-
<i>About This Report</i>	-ii-
Notes on PDF Version	-iii-
Chapter 1 Introduction	1-1 to 1-2
Chapter 2 Primary Sources: The Written Record	2-1 to 2-4
Chapter 3 Primary Sources: The Photographic Record	3-1 to 3-3
Chapter 4 Planning and Preparation	4-1 to 4-2
Chapter 5 The Question Of AT Guidebooks	5-1 to 5-6
Chapter 6 Mt. Oglethorpe - Amicalola Falls (Part I)	6-1 to 6-7
Chapter 7 Northern Georgia	7-1 to 7-4
Chapter 8 Southern North Carolina	8-1 to 8-9
Chapter 9 Snowbird Mountain	9-1 to 9-5
Chapter 10 The Watauga River Valley (Tennessee)	10-1 to 10-4
Chapter 11 The New River Valley (Virginia)	11-1 to 11-13
Chapter 12 The Blue Ridge of Southern Virginia	12-1 to 12-14
Chapter 13 Additional Case Studies: Virginia	13-1 to 13-13
Chapter 14 Post Hike: August 1948 - January 1949	14-1 to 14-9
Chapter 15 Post Hike: 1949 - 1950	15-1 to 15-13
Chapter 16 Mt. Oglethorpe - Amicalola Falls (Part II)	16-1 to 16-5
Chapter 17 Summary	17-1 to 17-10
Chapter 18 An "Equivalent Hike"	18-1 to 18-4
Chapter 19 A Conclusion	19-1 to 19-6
Endnotes (Numbered by Chapter)	N-1 to N-27

**- ABOUT THIS REPORT -**

*This Report is about the “old” Appalachian Trail of the 1940's and early 50's through Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia (to Rockfish Gap) – and the 1948 Appalachian Trail thru-hike of Earl V. Shaffer (1918 - 2002). The research for, the writing of, and the distribution of this Report has been exclusively a personal project of the author. The content of this Report is solely the work product of the author, based upon the sources cited herein, and was prepared without affiliation with or financial support from any other person or organization.*

*The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance received from a wide variety of individuals and groups in the research for this Report. Throughout that research, the author has received and benefitted from the assistance, courtesy and, often, the patience of folks in libraries, museums, archive collections, newspapers, and government agencies on every level, as well as helpful private citizens met along the way. That assistance in the quest for answers to the questions of sixty or more years ago rose by this Report is acknowledged with gratitude.*

*A limited number of copies of this Report are being distributed without charge to individuals, groups and agencies who are likely to have a particular interest in or additional information as to the subject matter. A copy of this Report is also available by electronic transmission as a PDF file (with minor edits and reformatted for PDF transmission). Any party interested in receiving this Report in that format may contact the author.*

*Comments are sought and welcome – positive, negative, corrective or supplemental – from readers. It is anticipated that there will be much to comment on, as this Report is an unfinished work, likely with numerous errors – in fact, if the author managed to consistently spell “Oglethorpe,” “Amicalola,” “Nantahala,” “Tapoco,” “Simerly,” and “Bearwallow” (which WP 12 spellcheck insists on making “Burwell”) correctly, keep page numbering sequential, and present a document that is at least readable, he will consider this work minimally successful.*

*Finally, the author reserves no rights to this work – others may use, copy and distribute it as they wish. Any such use should be, however, with the caveat that it is an unfinished work and the author does not represent it to be a definitive, or even necessarily accurate in all respects, authority on the matters addressed. Being a strictly amateur researcher, the author presents this Report as an amateur “secondary (or tertiary) source” that more professional researchers will hopefully take as an invitation to delve more deeply into the available record of the history of the “old” Appalachian Trail and the early thru-hikers who set out to hike it.*

*Author contact information is as follows:*

*James W. McNeely  
P.O. Box 667  
Peterstown, WV 24963  
(304) 753-9904  
[thepathsproject@hotmail.com](mailto:thepathsproject@hotmail.com)*

*The author prefers U.S. Mail or e-mail communication.*

**Notes On PDF Version**  
(May 9, 2011)

This is a PDF copy (PDF Version 1.4) of a WordPerfect 12 document first produced in a print version, reproduced by photocopy, and distributed through a limited number of copies on April 26, 2011.

This version has been reformatted for PDF and electronic distribution. That reformatting has caused format changes that may cause some confusion in cross-referencing the original photocopied document and the PDF copy.

The original document featured page numbers by chapter, and the PDF version continues that format. Because of the reformatting process, however, the page breaks in the two versions may not exactly match. Since notes in the PDF version are at the end of the document rather than within every chapter, there are fewer pages in each chapter in the PDF version. The text pages in each version should, however, cross-reference reasonably well, even with the changed page breaks.

The original document featured endnotes after every chapter. The endnotes in the PDF version are at the end of the Report. To facilitate cross-reference, the endnote numbers in each chapter are the same in both versions, and the endnotes in the PDF version are presented by chapter.

There has been some minor editing in the process of the reformatting process in order to adjust page length as necessary, correct typographical or grammatical errors, and clarify the text where deemed necessary.

# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The genesis of this Report was the author's longtime interest in the "lost" sections of the original Appalachian Trail through the South – the sections of the early Appalachian Trail in that region that were abandoned in the late 1940's and the 1950's as the modern AT was moved off that original route and, in many cases, far away from the original Trail. What intrigued the author was the question of whether that old AT – and particularly the old AT through southern Virginia and along the Blue Ridge – could still be found, and traveled.

With use of old maps and AT guidebooks, the location of the old AT through Virginia was determined. Through field work, it became apparent that the reports of the demise of the old AT route due to development or Blue Ridge Parkway obliteration were, in many cases, greatly exaggerated. In substantial part, the old AT route still existed, intact. It could be found, and it could be traveled. With the sections of the old AT that could still be traveled identified, it was decided to use the first thru-hike of record through Virginia as the framework for a journey along the AT corridor of the 1940's through Virginia. It was, then, through that interest in the old AT that the author began research into the first AT thru-hike of record – that of Earl V. Shaffer in 1948.

This study of Shaffer's 1948 hike was therefore done within the context of the primary focus of interest being the old AT, and not any one hiker or hike. Shaffer's hike became a focus of the study only because of its recognized status as the first AT thru-hike of record.

The story of that hike – the 1948 AT thru-hike of Earl V. Shaffer – is legendary in the AT community.

But what was the actual hike behind the legend? For decades after completion of that hike in 1948, the information available for public review of that hike was very limited. Until 1981, the only publically available information on that hike came from Shaffer himself either through the slide show Shaffer prepared and presented to groups or the few magazine or Appalachian Trailway News (an ATC publication) articles he had written. It wasn't until 1981 that Shaffer privately published "Walking With Spring ("WWS")," his book on his 1948 hike. In 1983, WWS was commercially published by the Appalachian Trail Conference. So it wasn't until 1983 that the general public had access to a detailed account by Shaffer of his 1948 hike.

WWS did not, however, provide sufficient details to conveniently follow the actual course of Shaffer's 1948 hike. Instead, it offered only an anecdotal review of Shaffer's itinerary with little reference as to specific dates. Further complicating any modern effort to retrace Shaffer's day-to-day course of travel was that a substantial portion of the 1948 AT in Georgia, Tennessee and Virginia had been abandoned in the late 1950's in a series of AT relocations. With that 35-year delay in publication of WWS, those parts of the AT were no longer familiar to the AT community. A reader of WWS seeking to retrace Shaffer's hike would therefore be confronted with the difficulty of placing Shaffer on what was in many areas a long-abandoned and largely-forgotten AT route with only the anecdotal information found in Shaffer's book.

With such limited information available, Shaffer's account of that 1948 hike was therefore told and retold by him, then circulated throughout the AT community, without any real opportunity for testing his account of his hike with the route and features of the 1948 AT. By the time of Shaffer's death in 2002, the story of his 1948 hike as told by him had therefore become, without any real opportunity for questioning, the legendary story of the first recorded thru-hike of the Appalachian

Trail. The iconic and legendary nature of Shaffer as a person and his 1948 hike has only become more a part of AT lore since Shaffer's death.

But parallel with that incorporation of Shaffer and his 1948 hike into AT legend and lore came the release to the public of Shaffer's papers and photographs pertaining to his 1948 AT hike. After Shaffer's death, those materials became available through the donation of his papers and photographs to the National Museum of American History ("NMAH"). In addition, the Earl Shaffer foundation released DVD's that included Shaffer documents and photographs. That newly-available information, combined with documents, photographs and maps available for review from other sources, now makes it possible for the first time to substantially reconstruct Earl Shaffer's actual course of travel during his 1948 AT hike. This Report is the product of such a reconstruction of Shaffer's 1948 AT hike.

The geographic focus of this Report is on Shaffer's hike from Mt. Oglethorpe, Georgia (including his approach hike to the southern terminus the day before starting his hike), to Rockfish Gap, Virginia: April 3 – May 18, 1948. It is limited to that geographic area because that is the extent of the author's intensive study of the route of the 1948 AT. Specific attention will be directed by a series of case studies to Shaffer's travels through specific sections of the AT in that geographic area. For each case study, there will be a discussion of the route of the 1948 AT, Shaffer's various narratives of his travel through that area, and a review of whatever other relevant information has been found in the research for this Report. For each specific area, there will be a determination of AT miles not hiked by Shaffer, which will be calculated based on the data as presented.

This Report will therefore follow Shaffer's 1948 AT hike by use of his words and photographs describing that hike tracked against the route and features of the 1948 AT as described in AT guides of the period along with maps and other relevant information. As Shaffer leaves Jasper on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, this Report will therefore track him by the trail of words and photographs – and continue to track him through Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia, to Rockfish Gap.

This Report begins, then, as Earl V. Shaffer arrived in Jasper, GA, on April 3, 1948, to begin what would become one of the iconic hikes in the history of the Appalachian Trail – what is now accepted as the first recorded thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail.

## CHAPTER 2 PRIMARY SOURCES: THE WRITTEN RECORD

This Report will track Shaffer's 1948 AT a hike through the available record both as to the course of travel of that hike as well as the location and features of the 1948 AT. While that record includes a wide variety of sources that will be identified as they are cited in the text, there are a number of primary sources frequently cited that will be identified in this chapter so as to facilitate reference by the reader.

### A. Shaffer's Major Writings

Shaffer described his 1948 AT a hike in three major writings. Those documents include his book, Walking With Spring, the "Little Black Notebook" journal he kept during the hike, and his 1948 report on that hike to the Appalachian Trail Conference.

#### 1. Walking With Spring

As previously noted, Walking With Spring ("WWS") is Shaffer's book about his 1948 hike. First privately published in 1981, it was commercially published by the Appalachian Trail Conference ("ATC," now the Appalachian Trail Conservancy) in 1983. An edition published in 1995 was referenced for this report.

What is immediately striking to a reader of WWS seeking to reconstruct Shaffer's 1948 hike is the lack of dates stated in the book? In fact, there is not a date stated therein for commencement of the hike, and no dates noted at all in WWS through the southern Appalachians until page 53, where Shaffer notes in passing that he was in Damascus, Va., while a "May Day celebration" was taking place. If not for that incidental comment, the reader would not have even the awkward process of reconstructing dates of his hike by noting the reported passage of days before and after that May 1 date in Damascus.

The other specific date mentioned in WWS south of Rockfish Gap is May 15<sup>th</sup>, a date noted by Shaffer as being the date he visited the Peaks of Otter (WWS at 65). That identified date is not, however, consistent with either LBN or SR48, both of which identify that date as May 14<sup>th</sup>. For reasons explained in a later chapter, the LBN/SR48 date of May 14<sup>th</sup> will be accepted for this Report.

With no inclusion of dates, WWS was obviously not intended as a documentary record of Shaffer's 1948 AT hike. Instead, it is an anecdotal narrative published decades after the fact not as documentation of that journey, but rather as a literary work about Shaffer's experiences on that hike.

Since the passage of such a lengthy period of time before publication raises a question as to how authentic an account for a 1948 hike a 1981 book might be, it is worth inquiry as to whether the 1981 publication was (1) of a much-delayed book written soon after the 1948 hike, (2) publication of a book about a 1948 hike written long after the fact and just before its 1981 publication, or (3) publication of a book the writing of which began soon after the 1948 hike and continued through various drafts and revisions through the intervening decades. The available record establishes that the latter was the case. Shaffer began writing what was to be WWS soon after his 1948 hike, and that manuscript was revised and rewritten through numerous drafts during the intervening decades before publication in 1981.

The NMAH collection includes a number of drafts of the work that would be published as WWS. These drafts range from a collection of what appear to be loose research notes to a number of drafts in various states of completeness. None of the early drafts are dated, but Shaffer did indicate in a March 8, 1956, letter to Forrest R. Rees<sup>1</sup> that he had, by that date, written and revised his book several times. It is not clear from the record reviewed for this report whether Shaffer continued to actively work on the manuscript on a regular basis during the entire period, or whether it was set aside for periods of years during that time. But it is apparent that WWS was written, rewritten and revised repeatedly beginning at some point relatively soon after completion of the 1948 hike and continuing until its first publication in 1981.

Reference to those drafts is difficult because of the lack of any dating. However, there will be some discussion of what appear to be important rewrites and revisions during the course of the several drafts of WWS. Any such draft will be identified in the NMAH collection as referenced.

## 2. The “Little Black Notebook.”

In WWS, Shaffer frequently cites the “Little Black Notebook” (“LBN”) he carried with him on his 1948 hike. The original of the “Little Black Notebook” (“LBN”) is part of the NMAH Collection, along with a reference copy for use of NMAH visitors.

Although specific portions of LBN will be discussed in detail later in this report, a few general observations can be made as to that journal.

The LBN is a ring-bound, loose-leaf notebook of military origin that is made up of lined, unnumbered pages, with paper quality being that expected of common notebook paper of the era. The LBN presents a largely anecdotal record, rather than some systematic notation of when certain locations were reached. Days of the week appear in the text of the LBN, but dates appear as apparent insertions. That suggests that Shaffer dated the text at some point after he wrote it.<sup>2</sup> Although other sources establish that the year of Shaffer’s AT hike was 1948, LBN does not state a year for its entries. Confusingly, a 1947 calendar is included as the first page of the LBN (at 1<sup>3</sup>).

LBN does not include any sequential photographic record. References as to photographs taken are infrequent and casual. Since there is no hint in the record of any other contemporaneous record kept by Shaffer, it therefore appears that his 1948 photography was not systematically documented.

In general, LBN has the appearance of being a casual record of events and locations noted by Shaffer in a contemporaneous, or near contemporaneous, time frame during the 1948 hike.

While a copy of LBN is now available for review at the NMAH, research for this Report has not found that document otherwise available. While *Earl Shaffer’s 1965 Appalachian Trail Journal* (© Earl Shaffer Foundation), the daily journal of Shaffer’s 1965 AT hike, is available for reading at [www.trailjournals.com](http://www.trailjournals.com), the author is unaware of any such convenient source for review of LBN. While the *Walking With Spring* DVD published by the Earl Shaffer Foundation includes a document entitled “Earl’s Daily Journal,” that narrative is not LBN, but rather a copy of the portion of Shaffer 1948 report to the ATC (cited and described as “SR48” below) that provided a day-to-day narrative of his 1948 hike.

## 3. The 1948 Shaffer Report to the Appalachian Trail Conference

The official phrase used to describe the recognition given Shaffer’s 1948 hike is that he was “the first to report a thru-hike, walking the entire Trail from Georgia to Maine.”<sup>4</sup>

What then was that “report” that Shaffer made that caused his 1948 hike to be accepted as the first thru-hike of record?

That report was Shaffer’s 1948 report to the Appalachian Trail Conference.

After Shaffer completed his AT hike in August 1948, he sought to have the hike recognized by the Appalachian Trail Conference (“ATC,” formerly the “Appalachian Trail Conference” and now the “Appalachian Trail Conservancy”) as the first thru-hike. After completion of that hike, Shaffer prepared and submitted to the ATC, in November 1948, his

REPORT OF HIKING TRIP VIA APPALACHIAN TRAIL  
FROM MT. OGLETHORPE, GEORGIA (April 4, 1948)  
TO MT. KATAHDIN, MAINE (August 5, 1948).

In “Memorandum No. 3,” dated November 23, 1948, Myron H. Avery, Chairman of the ATC, transmitted Shaffer’s report on his 1948 hike to the officers of the ATC.

Shaffer’s report to the ATC included two pages of comments as to what equipment he used, his choice of foods, and his general observations. Following those initial comments, Shaffer’s report presented what he called “. . . a sketchy account of each day’s progress,” with entries beginning with a description of his arrival in Jasper Ga., on April 3, 1948, his approach to Mt. Oglethorpe on that day, and commencement of his hike on April 4, 1948, and ending with his arrival at Mt. Katahdin on August 5, 1948.

That 1948 report of Shaffer to the ATC will be hereinafter referred to as “SR48.”

A copy of SR48 can be found in the NMAH Shaffer collection. It is also part of the record at the ATC Archives. A copy of that Report is most conveniently available, however, as a feature of the “Walking With Spring” DVD published by the Earl Shaffer Foundation in 2005. It should be noted, however, that the Shaffer Foundation copy does not include the initial two pages or Avery’s “Memorandum No. 3,” but instead includes only the day-to-day description of the hike. It is also confusingly entitled on the DVD a “Daily Journal,” which might lead a viewer to believe that SR48 was a daily journal kept by Shaffer during the course of his hike. It is not, but is instead a copy of the report prepared by Shaffer after completion of his hike for submission to the ATC in November 1948.

The contemporaneous record of that hike is instead found in Shaffer’s “Little Black Notebook” (LBN) discussed above.

Since Shaffer prepared SR48 for the purpose of submission to the ATC in support of his hike being accepted as a thru-hike by that organization, it must be viewed with some caution. Under the circumstances, Shaffer had a strong motive to present his hike in the light he assumed would be most acceptable to the ATC. Even so, SR48 is a valuable research source. Read together with LBN, SR48 presents the reader a “snapshot” of how Shaffer described his hike in 1948, both during and in the few months following that hike.

## **B. AT Guidebooks**

As previously discussed, the route of the 1948 AT through the study area of this Report is substantially different from that of the modern AT. Areas of the ‘48 AT in the South particularly relevant to a review of Shaffer’s hike were abandoned in the course of several major relocations in the 1950’s that caused those former AT sections to become remote from the relocated AT corridor.

The subsequent passage of years, and decades, caused awareness of the location and features of those AT sections to fade and disappear from the AT community. Such a lack of awareness in the community of the location and features of the 1948 AT makes reconstruction of Shaffer's 1948 AT hike more complicated.

As will be discussed in a later chapter, Shaffer did not carry or use AT guidebooks during his 1948 AT hike through the region addressed in this Report. Instead, he primarily relied on oil company road maps and the AT markings along the Trail. A modern reconstruction of that 1948 trail route in long-abandoned areas of the AT cannot, of course, rely on AT markings. Use of such AT guide data is necessary in such areas to reconstruct for the reader the route and features of the 1948 AT to track against Shaffer's course of travel.

The AT guidebooks referenced in preparation of this Report are as follows.

1. Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee

Guide To The Southern Appalachians (ATC, 1937)

Guide To The Appalachian Trail In The Southern Appalachians (ATC)

(Second Edition, 1942, with Updates of June 15, 1945, May 15, 1947, and April 2, 1948, and Third Edition, 1950)

2. Virginia

Guide To Paths In The Blue Ridge (The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club)

(First Edition, 1931; Second Edition, 1934; Supplement, 1937; Third Edition, 1941; Fourth Edition, 1950).

Guide To The Appalachian Trail In Central And Southwestern Virginia (The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, Fifth Edition, 1960)

Guide To Trails In The Shenandoah National Park (The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, Fifth Edition, 1959)

These guidebooks will be referenced as "Guide" followed by the year of publication.

# CHAPTER 3 PRIMARY SOURCES: THE PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

## A. Introduction

In discussions or descriptions of the Shaffer 1948 AT hike, much mention is made of the photographs Shaffer took during that hike.

This report will discuss slides from several sets of slides available for review at either the NMAH or through DVD's published by The Earl Shaffer Foundation. Photographs referenced in this Report will be described, but this report will not present any image of those photographs. The number of photographs to be discussed makes any effort at such image presentation impractical.<sup>1</sup>

## B. The Shaffer Photographic Record

### 1. The Shaffer Slide Show slides

The best-known collection of Shaffer photographs is that used by him over a number of years in presentation of his narrated slide presentation. The NMAH Collection includes a collection of slides that are identified as the "Appalachian Trail Slides, 1948" which appear to be those Shaffer slides.

The NMAH contents description<sup>2</sup> states that

The number of the file corresponds with its position on the carousel within its box. Each slide has its number circled, ignore other numbers.

From that, it appears that the NMAH "Appalachian Trail Slides" are slides that were donated to the NMAH in slide carousels, then removed by NMAH staff and placed in transparent sleeves for viewing. The circled numbers on the slides are the numbers that will be used for reference in this report, with a description of the slide for additional identification.

The 2005 Shaffer Foundation "Walking With Spring" DVD includes an audio recording of Earl Shaffer presenting a slide show about his 1948 AT hike (apparently presented sometime in the 1980's) with a video record of each slide as it is shown and narrated by Shaffer. The cover of the case of that DVD describes the DVD as "Original 1948 Slides With Earl Shaffer Narrating."

From comparing the NMAH collection with the slides presented in the Shaffer Slide Show as presented on the "Walking With Spring" DVD, it appears that the slide carousels donated to the NMAH as part of the Shaffer collection were the complete set of slides used by Shaffer in his slide shows, and that from that set of slides he would select the slides to be shown at any particular slide show, depending on perhaps the particular interests of the audience or the time available for each particular presentation.

The NMAH "Appalachian Trail Slides, 1948" (hereinafter "NMAH 1948 AT Slides") collection will therefore be a primary source for discussion of photography issues in this report. Reference as to individual slides will include the Box and File Number assigned each slide by the NMAH, and a description of the slide.

In addition, reference will be made both to the slides shown on the “Walking With Spring” DVD as well as Shaffer’s narrative as to those slides (referenced as “DVD Slide Show”). Reference to slides will be by each slide’s numerical position in the DVD presentation, with a description of the slide for additional identification.

An important difference between viewing the NMAH 1948 AT Slides collection and the slides shown in the DVD Slide Show is that while only the slide images can be viewed in the latter, slide mounts and marginal film information can be seen and studied in the former.

## 2. The WWS Index Slides and the Lecture Series Slides

The Earl Shaffer Foundation has also prepared a 2009 DVD entitled

Walking With Spring Index  
With 403 1948 color pictures  
Taken during Earl Shaffer’s Thru-hike

That DVD also includes a PDF Format index for WWS, by chapter and page, with pages references presented for each of the 403 slides presented on the DVD. Some of those slides appear to be duplicates of slides in the NMAH 1948 AT Slides collection/DVD Slide Show,<sup>3</sup> while most are not. This collection will be referenced as the “WWS Index Slides,” with each discussed slide described and identified by the photograph index number assigned it in that index.

The NMAH Collection also includes a collection of what are identified as the “Lecture” Slides, which is a collection of slides arranged and identified by chapter of WWS. The slides in this set are not numbered, but are presented by chapter of WWS, and are also referred to at the NMAH as the 2007 Addendum.<sup>4</sup> These slides will be referenced as the “NMAH Lecture Slides.”

The NMAH Lecture Slide collection appears to be made up on many of the same slides as are found the WWS Index scans.

An important difference between viewing the slides in the WWS Index Slides DVD and the NMAH Lecture Series Slides is that while only the slide images can be viewed in the former, slide mounts and marginal film information can be seen and studied in the latter.

## 3. Other photographs

In addition to the other slide collections discussed above, the NMAH Shaffer Collection also has a number of slides in Box 2 of what is called the “2009 Addendum.” As of January 2011, those slides are in old slide boxes in a collections box, with no inventory or catalog as yet prepared of the contents of the box. These slides will be referenced as the “2009 Addendum Slides.” Those slides are currently (April 2011) stored without inventory.

The bulk of Shaffer’s photographic record is made up of color slides. In a May 19, 1948, Waynesboro *News-Virginian* interview, Shaffer reported taking color photographs on his 1948 hike with no mention of any black and white photographs. There is, however, mention in LBN of Shaffer having taken “BW” (presumably meaning black and white) photographs on April 9 and 10, 1948 (LBN at 18 and 20). There are in the NMAH collection a number of generally unidentified and uncataloged black and white prints, but no negatives were found. Those prints may be prints from negatives, or prints from slides. Other than the few references to “BW” photos in LBN, there was therefore nothing useful found in the record as to black and white photographs.

### **C. The Shaffer Photographic Record As Documentation Of His 1948 AT Hike**

The particular nature of the Shaffer photographic record as documentation of his 1948 AT hike warrants some general observations.

As previously discussed, there is no systematic written record of the taking of the Shaffer photographs. There are numerous mentions in LBN of Shaffer having taken photographs, but such entries consist only of brief notes that are inconsistently made through the record. It is not therefore possible to match the photographs found in the Shaffer record with such entries in LBN.

A number of common characteristics of the photographs found in the Shaffer photographic record make them of little value as documentation. The appearance of the slide mounts in the collection does not present what would generally be expected of the photographic slide record of a continuous journey. What would be expected of the photographic record of a journey like an AT hike would be a series of slides with similar-looking mounts bearing sequential mount (or film) numbers. That is not the case with the Shaffer photographic record. A review of the NMAH 1948 AT Slides (the Shaffer slide show slides), which include the slides selected by Shaffer to illustrate his hike, presents instead a series of slides with different types of mounts interspersed through the collection, and with frequently out-of-sequence mount (or frame)<sup>5</sup> numbers. Gaps in mount/frame numbers are frequent and often confusing. While a number of slides feature “Anso Color” or “Kodachrome” mounts consistent with those used for mounting slides in 1948, other slides feature “Kodachrome Transparency” mounts reportedly not used by Kodak until May 1949.<sup>6</sup> Other slides randomly interspersed throughout the collection are in glass-mounts having a very different appearance than the other slides found in that collection.<sup>7</sup>

Apart from the inconsistent mounting and mount/film numbering of the slides in the Shaffer record, the subject matter of the photographs found in that collection substantially lessens their value as documentation of a 1948 hike along the AT. With few exceptions, the photographs are “generic” in that the subject matter offers no intrinsic indication as to when the photograph was taken or that Shaffer was present at the time. The review of that record in preparation of this Report found only one photograph featuring an image of Shaffer or any equipment identifiable as his along the entire AT from Georgia to Rockfish Gap.<sup>8</sup> Very few photographs include views of structures, signs, or other cultural features sufficient to date the photographs. What that record instead includes in substantial part are images of woodland features and views that lack any intrinsic features to date the photographs as to any particular year.

The Shaffer photographic record of his 1948 AT hike does not therefore present the expected appearance of a sequential photographic record of a continuous journey.

What can be concluded in terms of this Report is that the Shaffer photographic record does not offer any substantial direct documentation of his 1948 AT hike. Other than Shaffer’s direct, inferred or assumed claims<sup>9</sup> to have taken the photographs in that photographic record, there is little or no intrinsic “proof” in either the content or organization of that record as to who took those photographs, who was present at that time, when the photograph was taken, or (in many cases) even where the photograph was taken.

For purposes of this Report, however, it will be assumed that Shaffer took the photographs in his photographic record (with the exception of the glass-mount slides discussed above). In later chapters, individual and groups of slides will be discussed as to when the photograph was likely taken, the known or likely location of the photograph, and the significance of such photographs to the process of reconstruction of Shaffer’s course of travel during his 1948 AT hike.

## CHAPTER 4 PLANNING AND PREPARATION

When he undertook his 1948 hike, Shaffer was 29 years old. He had joined the U.S. Army in 1941, serving in the Signal Corps in the Pacific Theater. After his discharge from the U.S. Army, Shaffer apparently got the idea of thru-hiking the AT from a 1947 “Outdoor Magazine” article that indicated that the AT had yet to be completed in a single journey.<sup>1</sup> In WWS (at 8), Shaffer described the start of his 1948 hike as the threshold of a great adventure “long delayed World War II, and without my trail partner, who had been killed at Iwo Jima.”<sup>2</sup> He described his army service as leaving him “confused and depressed,” that perhaps an AT hike “would be the answer,” and stated the idea behind the hike as follows:

Why not walk the army out of my system, both mentally and physically, take pictures and notes along the way, make a regular expedition of it. The Trail would benefit at a time when it was at a low ebb.

He noted in WWS the experience that he thought would be sufficient to hike the AT:

. . . My background of “running the brush” in all kinds of weather, based on the writings of such men as Nessmuk and Gray Owl, should carry me through. Surely those years of trailing with Walter [Winemiller], when we first heard of the Appalachian Trail and wanted to walk it, would be an asset now.

Shaffer may have talked with Walter Winemiller about walking the AT, but his 1948 hike was apparently planned in a rather hurried manner. In a January 18, 1949, letter<sup>3</sup> to “Outdoor Life,” he described that planning as follows.

Serious planning for the trip began about the first of the year. Gradually I acquired the necessary equipment with the intention of starting about the fifteenth of March, but the weather continued cold and I revised the schedule to around the first of April. Then the literature from the ATC failed to arrive and I was informed by letter that it was returned “address changed.” Consequently, I had to choose between more delay and starting off with nothing more than roadmaps to guide me. I chose the latter and headed for Jasper, Ga

What is notable about Shaffer’s preparation is his apparent failure to inform anyone of his intention to hike the AT prior to his hike. He did not inform the ATC of his intention when he communicated with it prior to his hike, and only finally notified that organization in June 1948 as he was passing through eastern New York State.<sup>4</sup> In fact, it appears from Shaffer’s comments in WWS (at 84-85) that he may not have had a firm intention of hiking the entire AT when he started his hike. In those comments, Shaffer described his visit during his hike to his home in Pennsylvania. He noted (at 84-85) that as he paused at Center Point Knob that “So far my goal had been to reach Pennsylvania” and that he had “long since promised myself to keep going as long as nothing critical happened.” He noted that he decided at that point that “The Long Cruise would continue.”

Shaffer’s apparent haste in preparation caused his hike to suffer from hasty procurement of and an apparent lack of testing of critical equipment. Shaffer did not purchase a pack and tent until

January 1948, and did not apparently test either piece of equipment prior to beginning his hike. The pack he chose (a military surplus Mountain Troop Rucksack) did not initially carry weight comfortably, and his failure to properly test the pack prior to the hike caused him to have to adjust the pack and his packing techniques while on the hike. That was a relatively minor inconvenience, however, compared to the dire consequences that resulted from his failure to test the military-surplus tent he purchased for the hike. Weighing five pounds, Shaffer discovered the tent was a complete failure on the first rainy night. He sent the tent home after carrying it for about a week, and thereafter relied solely on a poncho for day and night rain protection.

In addition, Shaffer woefully underestimated his need for warm sleeping gear, and began the hike carrying only one medium weight blanket. Early in his hike, he stripped a zipper from the useless tent and sewed it into the blanket to increase its warmth.

Shaffer was apparently in very good physical condition when he undertook his 1948 hike, and was certainly experienced at hunting, trapping and woodcraft. Those skills served him well on his AT hike. However, he was handicapped by a lack of experience in long-distance hiking. His only reported experience in AT hiking was a week-long hike in the mid-1930's (1936 or '37) on the AT in Pennsylvania, from Snowy Mountain Tower, near Caledonia, to Dillsburg. That hike was not made with Winemiller, but rather with his brother, Evan. By 1948, that experience was too remote in time to be of any real benefit.

With his youth and early (pre-WWII) adulthood spent in the village of Shiloh (north of York, PA), the nearest section of AT was some 30 miles west. His "running the brush" would therefore probably not have included AT experience. Shaffer noted his limited long-distance hiking experience and his unrealistic expectations about the terrain he would encounter in the Southern Appalachians in a January 1949 Appalachian Trailways News ("ATN") article about his 1948 hike. In that article (at pg 5), Shaffer stated

My preconceived notions about the Trail were rather erroneous as a rule, even though I had traversed the part west of the Susquehanna before. For instance, I had the impression that Georgia was not very mountainous and therefore would not be difficult . . .

Shaffer could not, then, be said to be well prepared for his AT hike. The frequent stress created by his lack of adequate wet-weather gear and tentage undoubtedly influenced his navigational decisions during the course of that hike.

## CHAPTER 5 THE QUESTION OF AT GUIDEBOOKS

An often-noted feature of Shaffer's 1948 AT hike was that he did not use AT guidebooks during his hike. Instead, he relied entirely for navigation on oil company road maps, maps obtained from rangers of park areas, and whatever other information he obtained through signage on the AT or by inquiries of persons he met along his route.

In his "The Long Cruise" article published in the January 1949 Appalachian Trailways News ("ATN") published by the Appalachian Trail Conference ("ATC"), Shaffer stated that he had ordered "various books" that "went astray in the mail and were not received in time to be helpful." In WWS (at 11), he stated that

Because of mail difficulties at home I had not received maps and data from the Appalachian Trail Conference, and now had nothing but a road map to guide me. It showed the A.T. as a vaguely dotted line.

It is perhaps from such statements that the belief arose in the AT community that what Shaffer ordered from the ATC prior to his hike and failed to receive, because of mail difficulties, were AT guidebooks. That belief continues to be echoed to the present day: that Shaffer ordered AT guidebooks that were never delivered and that denied him use of such guidebook data.

But if Shaffer had ordered guidebooks from the ATC, his failure to await their arrival before his departure is curious. Having planned a four-month AT hike, the mid-March departure he originally planned, and his actual early April departure, was then (just as it would be now) an unnecessarily early departure for a person intending a 4-month AT hike. Given his "warm-weather" equipment, a delay of his departure until late April would have minimized his exposure to early-spring cold and rain in Georgia and North Carolina. Shaffer's writings as to his departure are silent as to what compelling reason Shaffer would have had to hasten his departure so much as to not await arrival of navigation information as important as the AT guidebooks.

Furthermore, failure to receive the guidebooks before departure does not adequately explain Shaffer's failure to attempt to obtain guidebooks either on his way to Georgia, or after the start of his hike. His bus journey from York, Pa., to Georgia would have, or could have, likely routed him through Washington, D.C., where the Appalachian Trail Conference was then located. In a November 27, 1948, letter to Shaffer,<sup>1</sup> Myron Avery discussed Shaffer's failure to procure AT guidebooks and noted that Shaffer could have stopped by the ATC headquarters on his way south to pick up guidebooks. Shaffer could have therefore conveniently obtained an AT guidebook en route to Georgia. Furthermore, although Shaffer recounted a number of visits to communities in April 1948, he apparently did not obtain, or attempt to obtain, any AT guidebooks by mail.

In fact, the record does not support a conclusion that Shaffer ever actually ordered the then-current (1942 Second Edition<sup>2</sup>) AT guidebooks for the Southern Appalachians (then a single volume for GA, NC and TN). In SR48 (his first public description of his hike), he explained his failure to use guidebooks as follows.

Due to an error on the part of the mail service at York, I didn't receive a quantity of literature in time and was forced to set out with nothing but road maps to go by. This resulted in errors and straying from the Trail. By the time I received these pamphlets, I was already through the most difficult terrain and decided to

continue without Guidebooks.

So what Shaffer complained in SR48 that was not delivered to him in York were not guidebooks, but instead certain “pamphlets,” which was probably the literature distributed by the ATC in response to inquiries from members of the public that enabled one to order guidebooks.

In WWS (at 80) Shaffer also discusses that AT literature. After meeting his father on May 28<sup>th</sup> near Snowy Mt. Tower in Pennsylvania, Shaffer reported that it “was decided I would return home to check over literature received from the Conference . . . “ Shaffer did, in fact, spend May 29<sup>th</sup> at home. And the materials he reviewed from the ATC were not AT guidebooks, but ATC literature.

Shaffer’s varying statements as to whether he had ordered guidebooks, or just literature, from the ATC apparently caused Avery confusion as well. In his Memorandum No. 3, of November 23, 1948, Avery stated what he apparently was told by Shaffer: that Shaffer had ordered guidebooks. But in his November 27, 1948, letter to Shaffer, Avery appears to make it clear that Shaffer’s communication to the ATC prior to his hike was not an order for AT guidebooks<sup>3</sup>, but was rather one of “hundreds of casual statements, to the effect that the inquirer is going to start on a trip over the entire trail . . .” Avery noted that Shaffer’s inquiry left the “margin for receiving literature . . . apparently short.” Avery further stated that “We are sorry that your over-modest expression of your intention did not more impress the person who filled your order for literature.”

It therefore appears that what Shaffer ordered from the ATC prior to his hike was not AT guidebooks, but literature describing the guidebooks. When he finally received the AT literature during his hike, he chose to not order guidebooks.

In fact, it appears that the primary reason Shaffer did not use guidebooks was because he didn’t particularly value such books. In SR48, Shaffer describes his attitudes as to AT guidebooks as follows:

For extended trips like mine, the Guidebooks are too cumbersome. I would prefer a set of contour maps, marked with shelters, springs and streams, points of interest and nearby towns. Had such a set been listed among available publications, I would have been delighted to send for it. As it was, I did fairly well on road maps, and Park Service Maps obtained from Rangers.

In a letter to Dr. George W. Outerbridge (as reported in a Philadelphia Trail Club December 1948 publication<sup>4</sup>) Shaffer noted that:

. . . trip was planned as a vagabond expedition, without any time limit, but to terminate within four months, if possible, without undue haste . . .

. . . the fact that I carried no guidebooks helped make the trip more interesting through suspense.

In his November 27, 1948, letter to Shaffer, Avery discussed Shaffer’s failure to use guidebooks and what he saw as the effect on Shaffer’s hike of that lack of guidebooks. He noted that the use of guidebooks would have “. . . would have robbed your trip of an element of pioneering and adventure . . .” But he noted that if Shaffer had received guidebook data from the ATC, “. . . it would have made it [Shaffer’s hike], I think, of more value to you and to the Conference.” Avery concluded his thoughts on Shaffer’s preference to not use a guidebook, and the effect on Shaffer’s hike use of a guidebook would have had, by noting that Shaffer’s hike “. . . would have been entirely

different . . . if through the availability of the guidebook data you had journeyed continuously over The Appalachian Trail.”

Given that Shaffer did not use guidebook data, what was the actual effect on his hike? Was a guidebook actually necessary to successfully navigate the AT in 1948? As previously noted, Shaffer reported as to navigation that he had done “fairly well on road maps, and Park Service Maps obtained from Rangers” on his hike.

The condition of the AT in the southern Appalachians at the time of Shaffer’s 1948 hike was reflected in the April 2, 1948, Supplement to the 1942 Guide. There were no reports in that Supplement as to continued reduced WWII maintenance in the National Forests in GA, NC, or TN. As to Virginia, the Supervisor of the Jefferson National Forest reported in a June 21, 1948, letter to Avery that the AT in that Forest was in satisfactory condition. In addition, there was apparently a “reblazing” project conducted on the privates lands portion of the AT in southern Virginia on March 15, 1947.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club had designated May 1946 as “Trail Marking Month” for the AT south of Rockfish Gap.<sup>6</sup>

The AT through the southern Appalachians in 1948 was, from all reports, certainly not a maintained trail to modern standards. A hiker would undoubtedly confront numerous fallen trees and encroaching woody vegetation along trail sections. But such obstructions did not obscure or obliterate the blazed AT route as much as it slowed a hiker’s progress.

Annual growth in the South was undoubtedly a major navigational hazard. It was so prolific that by mid to late May AT hikers often found sections of the AT difficult to traverse. By later in the growing season, some sections of the AT virtually disappeared under annual growth. Such conditions were particularly troublesome in areas where the AT traveled through abandoned farm lands or logged over areas. When the Trail was in established hardwood forests, such as in National Forests, it was less subject to such prolific annual growth. Like most other northbound hikers, Shaffer’s hike began early enough to avoid the heavy annual growth of later in the season.

One could therefore navigate the AT in 1948 successfully using only a road map. That is what Shaffer reported to the ATC in SR48 when he stated that he had done “fairly well on road maps.” But a hiker, such as Shaffer, intending to continuously and exactly follow the AT without use of an AT guidebook would find such a hike made frequently time consuming and frustrating by the loss, then by the subsequent backtracking and scouting required to relocate the AT. A lone hiker (such as Shaffer) would be greatly disadvantaged by not having the assistance of one or more fellow hikers in noting trail blazes or obscure turns or in scouting for a lost AT through timbered or storm-damaged areas.

Apart from navigation, a serious disadvantage for hikers relying solely on road maps was the lack of knowledge as to where one was and what laid ahead on the AT. Except for road intersections and the few other locations noted on a road map, even a hiker successfully following the AT by use of such maps would have no information as identification of current location or where ahead were located shelters, campsites, springs or other trail features unless such information was noted by signage. Lack of such information did lead to that “interest through suspense” that Shaffer seemed to value, but it also resulted in hikers often walking right past any trail feature not either right on the AT or identified by a sign marking a side trail. And that lack of knowledge as to where one was, what one was viewing at an overlook, or the name of physical features passed while hiking, made the AT an impossible-to-remember blur between the road intersections noted on a road map because of the lack of identified features with which to “anchor” memories.

If a hiker is making, like Shaffer, a “record” hike, that lack of knowledge of current location makes it virtually impossible to keep a contemporaneous account of the hike or to prepare an accurate post-hike narrative describing the hike. If one doesn’t know where one is, it is obviously difficult to describe the hike afterwards. If the hiker is attempting to make a photographic record of the hike, as Shaffer did, the lack of knowledge as to location makes contemporaneous notes as to the location and view of the photograph very difficult. There is no record that Shaffer made any such contemporaneous record of photography. It instead appears that he identified his slides from memory, which did complicate his efforts to accurately assign locations to his photographs.

In his November 27, 1948, letter to Shaffer, Avery addressed Shaffer’s critique of guidebook and the effect of not using guidebooks as follows.

I have noticed with interest your observations as to the usability of the guidebooks. I think, however, that it would be said that your point in answered by the extent to which you were off the Trail route, which would not have occurred had the guidebooks been available to you. As for your photographs, I would anticipate that you might have considerable difficulty identifying the localities in view of the expression of doubt as to where you were on various occasions.

As then to the issue of Shaffer’s not using AT guidebooks, the record reflects that Shaffer relied on road maps, and did not carry AT guidebooks, by his own decision and preference. Having made that decision, it was up to Shaffer to follow the AT by use of those maps and he reported that he did “fairly well” by use of such maps. His hike should therefore be judged no different as to success at following the AT than a hike using guidebooks with the possible exception that his following the AT as shown on the road map would seem to be proper in cases in which the AT had been relocated, the new location was not yet shown on road maps, and Shaffer had no other reasonably available source of information as to the new AT location.

Shaffer’s attitude as to following the AT when he began his hike is highly relevant to a discussion of his later navigation decisions while hiking the AT. As noted previously, there is little evidence suggesting any extensive prior planning. In WWS (at 8), Shaffer noted that he planned to “. . . move north with the spring, with the seasonal change, with no definite day-to-day goals but never tarrying long, as weather and terrain permitted.” His plan was to maintain an average pace of “close to twenty miles a day but would settle for fifteen.” In his 1948 ATC report, he summarized his planning as follows:

The trip was planned and executed to have no exact schedule, but to be completed in approximately four months. Since some parts of the Trail were likely to be impassable or nearly so, I reckoned on only maintaining the approximate route.

So when planning his hike, Shaffer anticipated that “some parts of the Trail were likely to be impassable or nearly so,” so he “reckoned on only maintaining the approximate route” (WWS at 8). When describing that hike after its completion in the 1948 Shaffer Report, Shaffer cited his lack of AT guidebooks for his “. . . errors and straying from the Trail . . .” and stated that:

I strayed at times and in getting back failed to cover every bit of the Trail route. Several times I found the Trail practically non-existent and was forced to bushwhack.

Shaffer’s pre-hike anticipation and post-hike descriptions therefore had the common thread of finding the AT “impassable or nearly so” or “practically non-existent.” And Shaffer’s stated intention was consistent with what he described he did after-the-fact: he forged ahead, “only

maintaining the approximate route” and “bushwhacking.”

What is apparent from the record is that in 1948 Earl Shaffer was very confident, and perhaps even overconfident, that his physical conditioning and outdoors experience would carry him through any conditions that he met on the AT without any need for sophisticated equipment or detailed planning. He fully expected the AT, and its blazes, to disappear from time to time. Once he started on the AT, he planned to just forge ahead under such circumstances. Shaffer summed up his intentions, and his confidence in his physical strength, in the January ATN article when he stated:

I knew once I started obstinacy would carry me through the rough spots.

When one combines Shaffer’s expectation that the AT would disappear from time to time with his reliance on obstinacy to carry him through such situations by “bushwhacking” ahead “maintaining only the approximate” route of the AT, it might be expected that Shaffer would respond to his straying off the AT (by, for instance, missing a turn) not by recognizing his error, stopping and retracing his steps to relocate the AT but rather by concluding that the AT and its blazes had “disappeared” and stubbornly forging ahead.

When following a blazed trail, a hiker may, from time to time, notice that blazes have disappeared. To anyone who has experienced that experience it is a familiar one, as curiosity turns to concern and then confusion and frustration as what appears to the hiker to be a perfectly good trail is no longer blazed. Any hiker intent on following the blazed trail knows to react to such a situation by the standard procedure of, first and foremost, stopping forward progress, then backtracking to a known point on the lost trail to get reoriented. What underlies that standard procedure is a well-founded assumption that the disappearance of blazes only rarely indicates that the trail has ceased to exist. It is not, therefore, the trail that is lost. It is the hiker.

But if a hiker who enters onto a hike, as Shaffer did, with an assumption that the blazed trail would disappear from time to time and become “non-existent” or “impassable,” the disappearance of blazes might not trigger the standard “stop and backtrack” response, but instead would trigger the “bushwhack ahead in the general direction of travel to relocate the trail ahead wherever it reappears” response anticipated by Shaffer when planning his hike and described by him in post-hike reports. And if the intent of that hiker is, as on the case of Shaffer, “only maintaining the approximate route” of the AT, and if the personality trait most depended up by the hiker is, as it was with Shaffer, “obstinacy,” then one would expect a litany of “the blazes disappeared and I had to bushwhack” in that hiker’s report of his hike. Such a viewpoint might well create a “I’m not lost, the trail is lost” attitude.

It is a well-established and often-repeated theme of Shaffer’s 1948 hike that he was forced by a poorly marked, inadequately maintained, sometimes impassable and occasionally non-existent AT to “bushwhack” his way north, compass in hand. But how historically accurate is that iconic image? What was the nature of the off-AT travel Shaffer reported as being “bushwhacking?”

If the term “bushwhack” had a technical meaning in backpacking parlance, it would probably be said to be “foot travel without a maintained trailway.” It is that meaning that creates the image of Shaffer struggling through tangled thickets in search of the elusive AT. But Shaffer didn’t use the term with such a narrow meaning in his reports. Although the record establishes that Shaffer did some travel through woods with no trail, that term as applied to Shaffer’s hike would be more commonly defined as non-AT travel on a road of some type. So that iconic image of Shaffer “bushwhacking” through some trailless tangle of woods must, in reality, instead include substantial travel on roads that were not part of the AT.

When Shaffer failed to follow the AT, to what extent was such “bushwhacking” actually necessitated by an “impassable” or “practically non-existent” AT, and to what extent was it actually a result of either avoidable navigational errors by Shaffer or even his deliberate decisions to not follow the AT?

Such inquiries are best addressed by reconstructing pertinent portions of Shaffer’s 1948 hike that particularly illustrate Shaffer’s reaction to navigational challenges, display his navigational decisions, and suggest what his attitude was as to how scrupulous he was about actually hiking the AT during his 1948 hike. In order to present such reconstructions, this Report will present a series of navigational case studies in which Shaffer’s decisions and attitudes about AT navigation can be observed, including situations in Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.

## CHAPTER 6 MT. OGLETHORPE- AMICALOLA FALLS (Part I)

When Shaffer undertook his 1948 AT hike, his initial journey had been from his home in York, Pa., to Jasper, GA, where he arrived on April 3, 1948. He would journey from there to Mt. Oglethorpe, then the southern terminus of the AT. From there, his hike would take him north on the AT 2,050 miles (then the official distance of the AT) to Mt. Katahdin, ME.

His reaching Mt. Katahdin on August 5, 1948, is a well-documented event. In fact, there had been so much radio and newspaper coverage of Shaffer nearing the end of his hike that, as he approached Katahdin Stream Campground at the base Hunt Spur (the AT route to Mt. Katahdin), he stated in WWS that was “fearful of what might happen there” because “of the newspaper and radio ballyhoo . . .” When he reached the campground, he was met at the base by Ranger Fred Pitman with a reporter and photographer for the Associated Press (WWS at 147-49).

The record of Shaffer’s approach to Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3, 1948, and the beginning of his 1948 AT hike on April 4, 1948, is, however, as confused and obscure as the end of his hike at Mt. Katahdin on August 5, 1948, is well known. Since Mt. Oglethorpe disappeared from the AT within a decade of Shaffer’s 1948 hike, following Shaffer’s travels in the area is made more difficult by the lack of familiarity of Mt. Oglethorpe in the modern AT community.

To reconstruct Shaffer’s travel from Jasper toward Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the circumstances of the commencement of his hike on April 4<sup>th</sup>, it is necessary to review in detail the several narratives by Shaffer as to those first days of his hike, and study in similar detail all the photographs purportedly taken by him in that area, against the backdrop of the topography and features of the AT in that area in 1948. This chapter will focus on Shaffer’s travels on April 3-4, 1948, as recounted in the two contemporary (i.e., 1948) narratives of his hike, which are the LBN and SR48. A more complete view of that April 3-4, 1948, period will be delayed, however, until much later in this report when more writings (including WWS) and photographs will be discussed.

The narrative presented in LBN is not useful as to events of April 3<sup>rd</sup>. That record commences on April 4<sup>th</sup> at the beginning of Shaffer’s hike.

In SR48, Shaffer notes that he arrived in Jasper April 3 and that he “[i]nquired of a man near Post Office as to which of the nearby mountains was Oglethorpe,” but that “[n]obody seemed to be quite sure.” He then reported that he talked to a boy “. . . who said reported that another hiker had left Jasper “one week previously on Easter Sunday.” Shaffer makes no report in SR48 of any further effort to obtain information as to the location of Mt. Oglethorpe or conducting any other business in Jasper, such as purchasing supplies or sending mail. He apparently took no photographs. So Shaffer’s contact with Jasper was brief and limited. But regardless of the lack of useful information obtained in Jasper, Shaffer nevertheless reported, in SR48, that he “[I]located road leading in general direction and started walking.” He then reported getting a ride in a truck, then walking several miles before getting another “lift” “. . . to the top of the ridge.”

From the SR48 narrative, it appears that Shaffer did not know when he arrived in Jasper that Mt. Oglethorpe was plainly visible from Jasper. It was a fact that would have been easily learned, however, since if he had been more persistent in asking “which of the nearby mountains was Oglethorpe?”, somebody would have surely eventually simply pointed it out, right “over there.”

From the report in SR48, it appears that Shaffer must have had some information as to the

location of Mt. Oglethorpe since he was able to locate a road leading in the “general direction” of the mountain without any apparent helpful information from his inquiries. That information could have come, and probably did come, from a road map. Unless he received information from his inquiries in Jasper not described in SR48, such a map may have been his only source of information as to the route to and location of Mt. Oglethorpe when he left Jasper.

Unfortunately, no road maps from that era are part of the NMAH collection. Shaffer did not apparently save the road maps he used, and did not note what brand of map he used. However, a review of several different oil company maps from the era, including Gulf (Rand McNally), Sinclair (Rand McNally) and Esso (General Drafting) suggests that an AT route and a location for Mt. Oglethorpe were shown on all such maps. In the January 1949 ATN article, Shaffer described the AT as appearing on the road maps used by him as “a vaguely dotted line.” Since the Esso maps showed the AT as a double line of red dots, making it a fairly prominent feature on the maps, Shaffer must have not been using an Esso map.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore likely he was using a Rand McNally-produced map (Texaco, Gulf, Sinclair, etc.), which did show the AT as a faint dotted line.

SR48 describes Shaffer’s travel, after locating the road leading in the “general direction” of Mt. Oglethorpe and starting to walk on that road, as follows:

Got lift in a truck and was warned about rattlesnakes. Walked several miles farther on then got another lift up to top of the ridge. After considerable fumbling around finally got on the right track and arrived at Oglethorpe in early evening.

Which roads did Shaffer follow when he walked out of Jasper on April 3<sup>rd</sup> in the “general direction” of Mt. Oglethorpe?

There were two routes he could have followed.

The first alternative route from Jasper toward Mt. Oglethorpe would be the only one consistent with traveling in “the general direction” of Mt. Oglethorpe from Jasper. Locating Mt. Oglethorpe from Jasper required nothing more than looking east, since the mountain was, at a distance of approximately 6 miles from Jasper, the prominent southern summit on the north-south ridge that defined the eastern skyline from Jasper.<sup>2</sup> One seeking the summit of Oglethorpe from Jasper in 1948 did not, in fact, face a particularly complicated navigational challenge. One had only to orient on the distinctive peak to the east and then “follow his nose” east on a series of public roads (leaving Jasper on what is now as “Cove Road” as shown on the 1946 Pickens County highway map ) that would, either by navigation by views of the mountain and/or by local inquiry, conveniently lead him by road to that summit at a travel distance of approximately 8 miles. In fact, such a traveler would have intercepted the blue-blazed Oglethorpe approach route from Tate that had been established by the GATC and detailed in the 1950 Guide.

The roads making up that route, however, were all unpaved secondary roads that apparently did not appear on an oil company road map.

The other possible route (which will be referred to as the Tate Mt. Estates route) to Mt. Oglethorpe was the vehicle route to the mountain, since the roads used could be traveled by an automobile to within 0.3 miles of the summit in fair weather. It did not, however, leave Jasper in the “general direction” of Mt. Oglethorpe, but instead traveled north, away from the mountain, then east to cross a ridge north of Mt. Oglethorpe. Using modern road names and route numbers, it followed Burnt Mt. Road (then Ga. 108) from Jasper in a northerly direction to what-is-now Ga. 136, then Ga. 136 (then Ga. 108) to Sequoyah Lake (Tate Mt. Estates), a distance of 9.8 miles. In 1948, Ga. 108

turned left through a gate and crossed the earthen dam at Sequoyah Lake. Ga. 136, which was a newer road, turned off Ga. 108 and continued east to cross the ridge. Ga. 136 was to eventually supplant GA. 108 through that area, and was even then considered the “main” road beyond its intersection with GA. 108, with Ga. 108 a much less traveled road.

The Tate Mt. Estates route to Mt. Oglethorpe turned onto Ga. 136 at that intersection. After a short distance, a gravel road turned off Ga. 136. That gravel road, which was then called the Mt. Oglethorpe Road (but would later be called “Monument Road”), which became an unimproved, fair-weather road after about ½ mile, led 6.4 miles to the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe.

The southernmost 4.7 miles of the AT that terminated at Mt. Oglethorpe followed that road. A hiker traveling that route to reach Mt. Oglethorpe to begin an AT hike north would therefore travel the last 4.7 miles of the AT south on the way to the summit, then backtrack when the hike north began. The first route (the Cove Road route) intersected that same road, and the AT, 0.3 miles north of the summit, so use of it did not require the extensive backtracking of the Ga. 136 route.

It is not possible to determine from the narratives in LBN and SR48 what route Shaffer followed toward Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. From the “in general direction” language suggests the use of the Cove Road route, but use of that route would not be consistent with reliance on a road map since the roads followed were not on such maps. If relying on a road map, he would have likely traveled the Tate Mt. Estates route.

The route followed by Shaffer is, however, apparently identified by a photograph in the Shaffer collection. That photograph is a self-photograph of Shaffer taken at a lake that he describes (in WWS at 9) as “showing a rear view of myself and pack with the lake at Connahaynee Lodge in the background” taken on the following day, on his first day hiking north on the AT. But he also identifies that same location as “. . . the road crossing where the loggers had left me the day before” when he was traveling toward Mt. Oglethorpe.

The slide itself can be examined in the NMAH 1948 AT Slides collection (File 001). It is probably Ansco Color film. The original slide bears the marginal film number “10.” The original mount has been removed and the slide remounted in a Kodachrome mount with a transparency inserted into the mount to display the title “Walking With Spring” on the face of the slide when shown.

That photograph location can still be easily recognized in the modern era as a view east from the dam at Sequoyah Lake, on Ga. 136.

WWS identifies the date of the photograph as April 4<sup>th</sup>. Determination of the date of that photograph is confused, however, by the DVD Slide Show narrative that states that the self-portrait at Sequoyah Lake was taken not on April 4<sup>th</sup>, but rather on April 3<sup>rd</sup> while he was “. . . searching for the mountain.” And such a narrative was not a slip of the tongue. In the NMAH collection<sup>3</sup> is what appears to be a draft of a written narrative for Shaffer’s slide show. In that written narrative, he describes his arrival in Jasper (including the anecdote about the man at the post office) and then states, in an apparent description of the Sequoyah Lake self-portrait, that “this picture shows me ~~that afternoon~~ at a road gap still searching for that elusive mountain.”

WWS and the DVD Slide Show narratives do therefore contradict one another as to the date of the Sequoyah Lake self-portrait. That contradiction will be addressed in a later chapter. What both descriptions agree on, however, is that Shaffer passed by Sequoyah Lake on April 3<sup>rd</sup> on his way to Mt. Oglethorpe. That appears to confirm that Shaffer’s route toward Mt. Oglethorpe was by the Tate Mt. Estates route.

The SR48, DVD Slide Show, and WWS Draft narratives all suggest that Shaffer suffered considerable confusion in finding Mt. Oglethorpe. SR48 refers to “considerable fumbling around before getting on the right track,” the WWS Draft reports Shaffer “still searching for that elusive mountain,” and the DVD Slide Show narration describes Shaffer as “. . . searching for the mountain” at the Sequoyah Lake photograph location. Shaffer gives no further details as to the cause of that confusion, but the “considerable fumbling around” language suggests he lost his way at some point and had to look for the mountain “before getting on the right track.” Reference to Mt. Oglethorpe being “that elusive mountain” is particularly notable.

That point of being disabused of his confused belief as to the location of Mt. Oglethorpe may well have been where the Mt. Oglethorpe Road turned off Ga. 136. As Shaffer traveled up Ga. 136 past Sequoyah Lake, he would almost immediately see the gravel road turning south with a “Mt. Oglethorpe” sign directing him south.

What the record establishes is that Shaffer was at Sequoyah Lake on April 3<sup>rd</sup> on his way to Mt. Oglethorpe, that he suffered some sort of confusion or misdirection while in that area, and that he believed that he did get “on the right track” to Mt. Oglethorpe. One could conclude that Shaffer very likely knew he finally was “on the right track” when he saw the “Mt. Oglethorpe” sign at that intersection on Ga. 136.

The first identifiable location described by Shaffer in either of his 1948 narratives (LBN and SR48) on his travel to Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3<sup>rd</sup> was Jasper. The second location he described, but didn’t identify, was Sequoyah Lake. The next feature he described, but did not identify by name, was (in SR48) a “shelter at the old fire tower.” That same feature was described in LBN as a “shelter by fire tower.”

In LBN, Shaffer’s brief notes as to his arrival at Mt. Oglethorpe are as follows.

Left from Mt. Oglethorpe *Apr 4* Sat. evening because rain threatening. Went to shelter by fire tower.

(Note: in quoting documents that have struck-through or crossed out text in the original, such text is identified by a ~~strikeout~~. Words inserted by Shaffer into the original document are in *italics*. Words inserted in the writing of this Report to clarify the meaning of the original, or lower case letters substituted for capitalized letters in the original, are indicated by [brackets]).

Also found in LBN is an entry that appears to relate to his camp on April 3<sup>rd</sup> that is inserted between entries that were apparently for Monday, April 5, and Tuesday, April 6. Although there was an apparent attempt to cross it out, it remains readable, in the following form:

~~At shelter on Oglethorpe  
Cooked potatoes  
onions and bits  
of jerked venison~~

In the 1948 Shaffer Report, Shaffer reported that he “arrived at Oglethorpe in early evening. He reported that “[t]he weather was cold and threatening rain so I went back down to the shelter at the old fire tower to spend the night, keeping fire.” For April 4, he reported that he “[s]tarted early from Mt. Oglethorpe, weather cold and raw.”

Both 1948 reports therefore state that Shaffer camped at the shelter by the old fire tower after having arrived at Mt. Oglethorpe on the evening of April 3 and then going “back down” to the

shelter. And the out-of-sequence note in LBN describes Shaffer's meal "At shelter on Oglethorpe." While LBN is ambiguous as to Shaffer's return to the summit on the morning of April 4, SR48 states that having camped at that shelter near the old fire tower, Shaffer returned to the summit to start his hike from Mt. Oglethorpe.

From those 1948 reports, Shaffer's description of Mt. Oglethorpe appears to associate it with a shelter (the "shelter on Oglethorpe" from LBN) by an old fire tower that he passed on the way to the summit that was close enough to that summit to go "back down" to the shelter to spend the night before returning to that summit to get an early start from there. In those 1948 versions of his account of reaching the summit then returning to the shelter by a fire tower it is apparent that Shaffer must have passed the structures on his way to the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe because he knew he could return to it to camp.

In his 1948 writings (LBN and SR48), Shaffer presents the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe as having no distinguishing features worthy of note in his writings. The only identifying language as to that summit in either of the 1948 narratives is that associating it with "the shelter at the old fire tower" to which Shaffer went "back down" to in the evening of April 3<sup>rd</sup>. While there was no such cabin/fire tower associated with Mt. Oglethorpe in 1948, the summit of that mountain was very distinctive with the 38' marble Oglethorpe monument, a prominent AT southern terminus sign, and sweeping views to the south. There is no reference to or description of any of those distinguishing features of the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe in either LBN or SR48.

Shaffer's 1948 narratives of the first day of his AT hike also create some confusion when read with knowledge of the AT route he would have followed after leaving Mt. Oglethorpe.

Shaffer reported in SR 48 and the LBN that he hiked from Mt. Oglethorpe to the south slope of Springer Mt. on that first day of his AT hike, which was a distance of approximately 22 miles.

In SR48, Shaffer described starting "early from Mt. Oglethorpe" with the "weather cold and raw" on April 4<sup>th</sup>, making ". . . good time over fair trail till about noon," then meeting "a family of three having a picnic near a water reservoir."

That description of the first few hours of his AT hike is difficult to track against the course and features of the AT in 1948 for a hiker leaving Mt. Oglethorpe and traveling north. A description of the AT that Shaffer would have traveled on April 4<sup>th</sup> read along with Shaffer's narratives of that day's hike will illustrate the inconsistencies between the two.

Mt. Oglethorpe, at 3,290<sup>4</sup>, is the southernmost summit on a north-south ridge (known as the "Amicalola Ridge" in the Guides). The 1948 AT left that summit on a washed-out road that descended steeply to a lower part of that ridge to a road intersection at about 3150' elevation where the Cove Road route from Jasper entered from the left and the road to Ga. 136 (and the AT) continued ahead. The AT followed the road toward Ga. 136 along that lower section of ridge to a point about 2.1 miles north of Mt. Oglethorpe, reaching a low elevation point of approximately 2900', before ascending steeply to the west across the south and then the western slope, at a more gentle grade, of Sassafras Mt. to reach the crest of the ridge (3200') between the two summits of Sassafras Mt.<sup>5</sup> at about 3.1 miles. The Sassafras Mt. cabin and tower was passed on the left at 3.3 miles. The first 3.3 miles of the AT therefore featured a notable descent, travel along a lower section of ridge, then a notable ascent to reach the higher section of ridge between the two summits of Sassafras Mt. Having reached that more elevated section of ridge, the road (and AT) followed it north over no significant change in elevation to a point 4.7 miles north of Mt. Oglethorpe. The AT left the road at that point, descended steeply by trail, then crossed Ga. 136 (then a gravel road) at a gap in the ridge (app. 2900' elevation)<sup>6</sup> at 5.1 miles from Mt. Oglethorpe.

Shaffer's description in SR48 of traveling "over a fair trail" north from Oglethorpe is not therefore descriptive of the first 5.1 miles of the AT he would have traveled, since 4.7 miles of the distance was on a road traveled by automobiles. The only trail section was one 0.4 miles in length immediately south of Ga. 136.

In an apparent early draft of WWS found in the NMAH Collection,<sup>7</sup> Shaffer presents another description of his hike from Mt. Oglethorpe to the first road gap mentioned by him (Ga. 136). It reads as follows:

After a few miles of fairly level progress the path turned down through a road gap. The *steep long* climb on the far side ~~was steep and long and soon~~ convinced me the pack must be made less burdensome ~~or I must become stronger if this was a fair sample of forthcoming labors~~. So I paused to adjust the carrying straps, to remove the largest pocket because it pulled backward and to rearrange the contents.

That description of his Oglethorpe - Ga. 136 hike is remarkable for its describing the first "few miles" as being "fairly level progress" before the AT "turned down through a road gap." The "turning down through a road gap" is accurate as to the sharp descent on the AT from just north of where it turned off the Mt. Oglethorpe Road to Ga. 136. But a description of the 4.7 miles from Mt. Oglethorpe to that point as a "few miles of fairly level progress" seems inconsistent with the steep descent and ascent involved in travel from Mt. Oglethorpe to Sassafras Mt. The 1.4 miles of the AT along that ridge could be described as "fairly level" from Sassafras Mt. (at Mile 3.3) to the turn-off (at Mile 4.7), but such a description would not accurately describe the 3.3 mile Oglethorpe - Sassafras Mt. section to the south.

North from Ga. 136, the AT generally followed the course of the ridge,<sup>8</sup> passing over a summit<sup>9</sup> (at app. 3150') before intersecting then-Ga. 108 at 6.4 miles, where the AT turned right on that unpaved road.<sup>10</sup> The 1948 AT followed that road to a point (at Mile 7.7) where it turned off "into a little used woods road" (1950 Guide), with Ga. 108 continued ahead to Ga. 52, near the community of Cartecay. At that point, a hiker traveling north from Mt. Oglethorpe would have followed a road for 4.7 miles<sup>11</sup>, an 0.4 mile section to trail to Ga. 136, a 1.3 mile section of trail to Ga. 108, and Ga. 108 for the remaining 1.3 miles. A brief description would state that the AT followed a road for a considerable distance, then an intervening trail section followed by another road. It would be the 6 miles of roads traveled that would characterize the 7.7 miles, not the 0.4 miles of trail and 1.3 miles of rail separated by the Ga. 136 crossing that separated the two road sections. Shaffer's description in SR48 of traveling "over a fair trail" north from Oglethorpe is not therefore descriptive of the first 7.7 miles of the AT he would have traveled north from Mt. Oglethorpe on April 4<sup>th</sup>.

After turning on the woods road at Mile 7.7, the AT generally followed a ridge to reach, at AT mile 11.8, Ga. 52 at what was called "Southern's Store" (with the "store" reference being a place name, not a business). The trail description of the AT from that woods road to Ga. 52 suggests that navigation between those points could be a challenge. That section of the AT that was apparently subject to logging operations, and had several indistinct turns.

The AT crossing of Ga. 52 was in an agricultural area. The AT south of Ga. 52, and that to the north, was described as passing through fields and woods. There is no suggestion of there being any reservoirs or picnic areas as Shaffer described reaching at about noon on April 4<sup>th</sup> in SR 48.

From Ga. 52, the AT climbed, then followed, Amicalola Mt. 4.4 miles to a road intersection<sup>12</sup> in Amicalola Falls State Park that was 15.6 miles north of Mt. Oglethorpe on the AT. At that

intersection, a right turn led 0.2 miles “to connect with road in Amicalola Falls State Park, which loops around Amicalola Falls and crosses dam at top of Falls” (1950 Guide).

There was a lake at the top of Amicalola Falls in 1950 (which has since been drained). There would have been, therefore, the kind of “water reservoir” here described by Shaffer in SR 48. Being a state park, there may well have been a family picnicking in that area. There not apparently being any other reservoir or picnic area on the AT between there and Mt. Oglethorpe, it must therefore have been the lake at Amicalola Falls that he reporting reaching by noon on April 3<sup>rd</sup> in SR48.

However, at 15.6 miles from Oglethorpe, reaching that point by noon would seem unlikely. That is particularly true given the delays Shaffer experienced, or likely experienced, on April 4<sup>th</sup>.

Those delays included:

- (1) hiking with an overloaded pack, which he subsequently lightened (as most long distance hikers do);
- (2) having not camped on the summit, the time required to return to the summit where the hike would begin from Shaffer’s camp at the cabin by the old fire tower;
- (3) the time required to unload, adjust and repack his pack near the Ga. 136 crossing, as described in that early draft of WWS,<sup>13</sup> and,
- (4) the expected delays in navigating the complicated 1.8 mile AT section from turning off the old woods road at AT Mile 10 (1950 Guide) to Ga. 52.

With sunrise at 6:21 a.m. on April 4, 1948,<sup>14</sup> Shaffer would have been hard-pressed to have cooked breakfast at the cabin, gotten packed up (with the usual inefficiencies expected so early in a long hike), returned to the summit he had reached the evening before, and started north before 7:30 a.m. That would give him about 4-5 hours to hike the 15.6 miles to the lake at Amicalola Falls by noon, which would require an overall average pace of more than 3 mph, including stops and the delays discussed above.

If Shaffer was hiking that fast up until noon on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, traveling 15.6 miles from Mt. Oglethorpe by noon, it raises the question of why he so drastically slowed his pace the rest of that day. He only traveled an additional app. 6-7 miles to his camp on the southern slope of Springer Mt. that night. With sunset at 7:01 p.m., and Shaffer apparently continuing to hike until darkness, that would slow his pace from the 3 mph before noon to less than an average 1 mph the rest of the day.

Shaffer’s 1948 narratives – LBN and SR48 - - therefore leave the reader with unanswered questions as to Shaffer’s course of travel on April 3-4, 1948.

Those unanswered questions will require, however, introduction into this Report of matters that require looking beyond the 1948 narratives and the August 1948 end of Shaffer’s hike. This report will therefore leave Shaffer’s travels on April 3-4, 1948, for now, and return to it in a later chapter at a point when such post-hike matters have been introduced into this Report.

## CHAPTER 7 NORTHERN GEORGIA

This Report will discuss two additional navigational case studies of Shaffer's hike along the AT through northern Georgia. The first is Shaffer's Doublehead Gap diversion off the AT on April 5, 1948, and the second is his travels in the Cane Creek Gap area on April 7, 1948.

### A. Doublehead Gap: April 5, 1948

The first example of AT navigation by Shaffer to be discussed is that of Shaffer's description of his first extended off-AT travel on his 1948 AT hike. It illustrates the actual nature of such off-AT travel as well as Shaffer's navigational skills and attitudes.

That first extended non-AT travel was on April 5, 1948, in Georgia and the second day of his AT hike. Shaffer described (in WWS at 11) crossing the summit of Springer Mt. in rainy, foggy weather and then reaching a "wire-enclosed area." Shaffer noted that at that point, he couldn't determine ". . . which way did the Trail turn?" He further noted that "[t]rees were moss-spotted. . . ." and "[m]arking was faded." Combining the WWS account with that in the SR48, it appears that he found himself intersecting a fire road at that "wire-enclosed area" along the boundary of the "Cherokee Game Refuge No. 1."

In the SR48, Shaffer reported that "due to indistinct marking" he turned "the wrong way" on that road, and that he arrived at "the road near Diamond to the north before realizing the error" where he was sitting on the bank of the road "staring at my map" when he met a local youth who told Shaffer he "reckoned the Trail went on the other side of the Game Refuge . . ." In WWS (at 11), he stated that he "tried the northwestern side and had gone seven miles along the boundary when a traveled road appeared where none should have been."

He then backtracked to the AT in a hike that he described in WWS as "wearisome, especially on blistered and aching feet" and aching "arches, knees, and hip joints."

Where did Shaffer lose the AT that day, and what can be noted as to his navigational decisions and attitudes from that experience?

In 1948, the AT turned sharply east at a trail intersection just north of the summit of Springer Mt., then descended to meet a fire road 1.7 miles north of that summit. The AT turned right on that fire road (now USFS 42) to continue east toward Winding Stair Gap. To the left at that intersection, a gated fire road led 8 miles northwest to a public road at Doublehead Gap. Although Shaffer believed he followed the AT (with "faded" marking) to that fire road, it is more likely that he lost the Trail in the vicinity of a trail intersection just north of the summit of that mountain where the AT swung east where he likely continued ahead in a northerly direction on an unblazed trail descending a ridge.<sup>1</sup> Following that ridge would have intersected that same fire road about 2½ miles east of the 1948 AT intersection at or near the current AT parking area.

That appears to be the case because there is no mention of any "wire-enclosed area" at the AT intersection with the fire road in either the 1942 or 1950 AT Guides, and because a wrong turn at that intersection would have required an unlikely sharp angle turn back to the west, through a gate, from the easterly course of the AT. And while Shaffer reported that he could not locate the AT at the "wire-enclosed area" because of "faded" and "indistinct" marking, he reported no problem relocating the Trail when he backtracked. That suggests his backtrack was to that "wire-enclosed

area” where he had become confused earlier that day and then beyond to rejoin the AT where it intersected the road further to the east.

But what about Shaffer’s reporting seeing “faded” and “indistinct” blazes? It is also unlikely that the quality of marking of the AT would change so dramatically as suddenly as Shaffer seems to suggest. He reported no problems with faded blazing as he crossed the summit of Springer Mt., but then, in the rain and fog with reported poor visibility, suddenly found the blazing “indistinct” in the same area as a bold turn of the AT at a trail intersection that, if missed, would send the hiker descending a ridge on an unblazed trail. Under such circumstances, Shaffer would not be the first misdirected hiker to see such faded or indistinct blazes on normal tree bark coloration<sup>2</sup>, and certainly not the first to be disabused of such illusions by reaching a point, such as a road intersection, where it becomes obvious that it is not the AT that the hike has been following.

Shaffer’s action at the point of confusion is also indicative of his navigational attitudes. When he first noticed the dramatic change in the appearance of what he perceived as AT blazes, he did not react with immediate concern as to whether he was still on the AT by stopping, considering closely the “blazes” he thought he saw on trees, and retracing his steps to the still near-by summit of Springer Mt. to get reoriented. He continued ahead, with poor visibility. And when he finally reached a point, after approximately ½ mile of descent (about 400' vertical) at the “wire-enclosed” area where he could no longer find anything that looked like the AT, he still did not stop, accept the fact that he was off the AT, and retrace his steps to the known location of the summit. Once he realized he was not on the AT such backtracking to a known point was not only the most secure way to relocate the AT. It was also the only way to return to the AT where he had lost it so he would, in the course of his 1948 hike, travel the entire AT.

Shaffer did not backtrack. Instead, he turned left and, with the orange blazes of the “Cherokee Game Refuge No. 1” apparently marking the right side of the road and nothing suggesting it was the route of the AT, walked approximately 7 miles on that fire road.

Where then was Shaffer going on that fire road when he turned left? Given the record, what is most logical is to assume that once Shaffer noticed that AT markings had faded, he gave up on the AT and instead traveled, he believed, north on a road that would move him on “. . . the approximate route” of the AT. He did not backtrack, and he did not scout, to relocate the AT. He instead headed in a direction he believed to be north on a fire road he knew was not the AT, assuming that it was roughly parallel to the AT route, and that he would make his way back to the Trail at some point.

But no such road existed. In fact, that northerly route is the one now followed by the modern AT. The road he followed didn’t travel north. It ran northwest, almost directly in the opposite direction to that of the AT which was then moving east and north. It is therefore almost certain is that Shaffer did not consult a compass. He then kept walking in a direction he thought was along the “approximate route” of the AT for probably 2-3 hours, until that fire road intersected a “. . . traveled road . . . where none should have been.” And in checking his map and finding out from the local youth he was near the community of Diamond, he realized he had not been moving north, but northwest, as the AT moved northeast, and that he had therefore walked directly away from the AT. He could see from his map that there was no “cut-across” road to get back on the AT. He had to backtrack. His attempted “bushwhack” around a section of the AT had failed.

That loss of the AT by Shaffer’s misdirection on April 5, his abandonment of any attempt to continue following the AT after that misdirection, and his apparent unsuccessful attempt to walk around a section of the AT by use of a fire road was, therefore, characterized Shaffer’s first off-AT travel.

Unsuccessful at his apparent attempt to “make-his-own-way,” Shaffer ended up having to backtrack, in the rain, to the AT on “blistering and aching feet.” He camped that night in a “morass of mud and dripping trees<sup>3</sup>” at Frying Pan Gap, where he found that the tent he was carrying was “poorly designed and almost useless.”<sup>4</sup> He also used all but one of his matches in starting a fire. (WWS at 12). He had covered only 4.4 miles on the AT on that day.

## **B. Cane Creek Gap: April 7, 1948**

The next day (April 6<sup>th</sup>) Shaffer continued, without noted confusion as to navigation, to Cane Creek Gap (WWS at 12-13), an AT distance of 9.9 miles.

Shortly after leaving Cane Creek Gap on April 7<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer left the AT, following the sound of a “hound baying in the valley northward” toward what he thought was a home or community to the north in a search for matches. He eventually reached a “small farm in a cove” where he obtained matches from a local resident. Rather than backtracking to the AT, he asked for directions to find the AT. Upon following a “four foot wide” road in the direction noted, Shaffer regained the AT “[n]ear the crest of the ridge,” turned in the direction he thought was north (left, from his point of view) on the AT, and, after “several miles” of hiking found himself back at Cane Creek Gap, where he had camped the night before. Shaffer’s explanation for that misdirection was that he had crossed “the overgrown Trail at a switchback,” then turned the wrong direction when he intercepted the AT again, but from the “wrong” direction ( WWS at 13). LBN (at 12-13) gives a similar report.

It is difficult to reconstruct Shaffer’s off-AT travel on April 7<sup>th</sup>. The best scenario fitting Shaffer’s narrative would be that he left the AT at the point it crossed a ridge on the AT (north of the summit of Gooch Mt.) 0.7 miles from Cane Creek Gap. He likely descended to a farm in the valley north of Gooch Gap. Upon his inquiry as to how to reach the AT, he may have been directed up the “abandoned road” noted as crossing the AT at Grassy Gap, 2 miles north of Cane Creek Gap. There were probably a number of old woods roads in that area. Shaffer likely followed such a road, but failed to recognize the AT when he crossed it. He then intercepted it again, but failed to consult his compass and turned in the wrong direction and traveled south the 2+ miles back to Cane Creek Gap. He had to then reverse his course to travel north, rather than south, on the AT.

Shaffer noted that “[s]uch shenanigans are strictly un-skookum when trudging two thousand miles” (WWS at 13). It appears from that narrative that Shaffer was moving in haste, and without navigational caution, in his crossing the AT without noting it, then hiking distinctively south for approximately 2 miles. Further, it is hard to understand why Shaffer left the AT when he did merely for matches when he apparently intended to leave the AT in any event later that day at Woody Gap (4.6 miles from Cane Creek Gap) on a road (Ga. 60) that was on his road map. He followed Ga. 60 to the community of Suches where he obtained groceries, then returned to the AT at Woody Gap.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever the reason for Shaffer’s making two off-AT trips on April 7<sup>th</sup>, he ended up at Woody’s Gap where he continued on the AT and apparently camped at a stream about 2½ miles from Ga. 60.

Shaffer’s AT mileage for April 7<sup>th</sup> was 7.1 miles. He had attempted to leave the AT near Cane Creek Gap and return to it in the vicinity of Grassy Gap. If he had been successful, he would have skipped approximately 2 miles of the AT. He failed in that attempt, and ended up walking substantial extra mileage in his leaving and returning to the AT and his inadvertent backtrack to Cane Creek Gap.

Shaffer’s daily AT average for April 5-7 was 7.1 miles. His poor mileage on April 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> was a direct result of his decisions on both days to attempt to return to the AT at a point further north than the point at which he had left the AT on each day.<sup>6</sup> The only reason Shaffer did not skip

parts of the AT on those days is because he was not successful in his repeated attempts to do so.

Shaffer crossed the GA - NC line on April 11<sup>th</sup>, his 8<sup>th</sup> day on the AT, and camped that night at Beech Gap (WWS at 20-21).

## CHAPTER 8 SOUTHERN NORTH CAROLINA

This Report will present three navigational case studies addressing Shaffer's hike through southern North Carolina on April 11 - 17, 1948. The first is of Shaffer's travels in the Rainbow Springs area on April 12 - 13, 1948. The second addresses Shaffer's travel in the Nantahala Gorge area on April 15, 1948. The third is of his travel on April 17, 1948, in the Fontana (Tapoco) area.

### **A. Rainbow Springs: April 12 - 13, 1948**

The first case study for the AT in southern North Carolina (i.e., south of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park) is that of Shaffer's visit to Rainbow Springs, NC, on April 12-13, 1948.

Shaffer arrived at the AT's intersection with a dirt road at Rock Gap, 0.44 miles north of Wallace Gap on the AT, in the evening of April 12<sup>th</sup>. There he met a Game Warden Buchanan,<sup>1</sup> Nantahala National Forest, who gave him a ride in his motor vehicle to a store in the community of Rainbow Springs, west of the AT crossing of U.S. 64 in Wallace Gap. Shaffer spent the night of April 12<sup>th</sup> in a "ranger shack" near the warden's home (LBN at 12, SR48, WWS at 22-23).

Rainbow Springs was a planned mail drop for Shaffer but he found out it had no post office. On April 13<sup>th</sup>, he returned to the store and found out from the rural mailman that he had no letters.

That Shaffer then returned to the AT is a certainty. The question is by what route?

In SR48, Shaffer reported that after meeting the mailman, he "headed up the Trail." In WWS (at 23), he described the AT's condition north of Wallace Gap. While neither narrative actually reports Shaffer returning to the AT where he had left it (near Wallace Gap), a reading of either leaves the impression that he did. In LBN (at 12), however, Shaffer does not report returning to Wallace Gap on U.S. 64. Instead, he narrated that after leaving the store at Rainbow Springs he "[f]ollowed a log trail up to AT."

So Shaffer did not return to Wallace Gap on U.S. 64 from Rainbow Springs on April 13<sup>th</sup>. Instead, he "short-cutted" some part of the AT when he instead following "a log trail" back to the AT.

His intersection point with the AT north of Wallace Gap can be inferred from his description in LBN (at 12-13) of what he observed on his route. He reported that after he intersected the AT, he came to a "crew making cordwood." The 1950 Guide (with data as of 1948) describes the AT being "interfered with by lumber operations on privately-owned land" through a ½ mile section beginning at a point 5.6 miles north of Wallace Gap. At 5.65 miles, the Guide notes an "access road" to the logging operation intersecting the AT. That point is likely the intersection of the "log trail" that Shaffer used as a shootout to intercept the AT on April 13<sup>th</sup> at a point north of where he had left it on April 12<sup>th</sup>.

Shaffer therefore rode in a motor vehicle on April 12, 1948, from the vicinity of Rock Gap, 0.44 miles south of Wallace Gap, to Rainbow Springs. On April 13<sup>th</sup>, he did not return to the point at which he had left the AT on the preceding day, but instead walked a "logging trail" to intercept the AT at a point north of where he had left it the day before. Based on contemporary AT data, it appears that by that short-cut he failed to hike approximately 5.6 miles of the AT.

Shaffer's failure to hike that 5.6 miles of the AT on April 13<sup>th</sup> is the first known instance of his knowingly and deliberately failing to hike a part of the AT on his 1948 hike. Unlike the off-AT travel in Georgia, which were failures to the extent they were attempts to go around a section of the AT, Shaffer was successful in his "short-cut" of approximately 5.6 miles of the AT on April 13<sup>th</sup>. That deliberate skipping of approximately 5.6 miles of the AT, in and of itself, technically "broke" any claim of his to have continuously hiked the entire AT during his 1948 hike.

## **B. Nantahala Gorge: April 15, 1948**

On April 15, 1948, Shaffer reached Wesser, on U.S. 19 in the Nantahala Gorge.

After going into Bryson City, NC, for color film (having otherwise resupplied at a store in Wesser, the community at the AT crossing of U.S. 19), Shaffer returned to the AT to continue north. At that time, the AT north crossed the Nantahala River by a secondary road bridge, then turned left off the road, up river, following some railroad tracks beside the river. At .55 from U.S. 19, at Flint Hill Siding, the AT turned right from the railroad tracks, through a gate, to begin its long ascent toward Swim Bald and Cheoah Bald.

When Shaffer started north, he crossed the Nantahala River bridge and turned onto the railroad, but then missed the turn-off of the AT from the railroad at Flint Hill Siding. He reported in WWS (at 25) that "marking was entirely lacking."

Shaffer's claim in WWS that "marking was entirely lacking" makes little sense in that if there had been no marking, how would he have known to turn off the secondary road onto the railroad bed? So there must have been AT blazes, markers or signs leading hikers onto the railroad bed. Since the AT had been in that same location along the railroad tracks since at least 1937,<sup>2</sup> it is implausible that no blazes (even aged blazes) would be present and visible to an AT hiker accustomed to looking for such markings. The turn off the railroad was an important one, and featured a gate. It is not likely that such a turn-off was not blazed. It is therefore more likely that there were blazes but that Shaffer failed to notice the turn-off and walked past it. And while Shaffer made the "no marking" assertion in WWS, he made no mention of such unmarked AT in LBN or SR48, but instead simply stated that he "missed turn out of Nantahala Gorge."

Marking would, of course, be entirely lacking after the AT turned off the railroad. Shaffer's apparent response to that lack of AT markings was in this case the same as was seen in the Doublehead Gap situation: he continued ahead without regard to the absence of markings until he reached some feature that made it obvious to him that he was neither on the AT nor likely to intercept the AT. In the Doublehead Gap case, it was intersecting an unexpected public road. In this case it was when he reached the extensive quarry operations of the Nantahala Talc and Limestone Company along the railroad at Hewitt approximately 2 miles beyond the AT turn-off from the railroad. He reported that he realized at that point "the mistake was obvious" and that he must have "missed the turn out of the Nantahala Gorge" (SR48).

He stated in WWS (at 25) that his choice was to "backtrack or to bushwhack up the steep, high slope." But from an AT hiker's perspective, there was no such choice. Shaffer knew the AT turn off the railroad and out of the Nantahala Gorge was back down the railroad, just a couple of miles away. It was just a matter of Shaffer backtracking back to the point at which he had lost the AT, and then continuing his hike from that point.

His decision was, however, to not backtrack to the AT. Instead, he decided to ". . . save time" (WWS at 25) by taking what seemed to him to be a short-cut. In the Doublehead Gap case, it was intersecting an unexpected public road. In this case it was when he reached the extensive

quarry operations of the Nantahala Talc and Limestone Company along the railroad at Hewitt approximately 2 miles up the river from where the AT left the railroad.

Anyone familiar with the Nantahala Gorge who reads WWS, or reviews Shaffer's other narratives concerning his 1948 hike, is immediately fascinated by that bushwhack. From an elevation of approximately 1850' at Hewitt, Shaffer, carrying a full backpack,<sup>3</sup> likely turned up Talc Mountain Branch, then probably worked his way out of that watercourse to the left to climb an ascending ridge to reach a summit, and the AT, just east of Sassafras Gap, at about 4350'. In about two apparently trailless miles, Shaffer scrambled and crawled his way up about 2500 vertical feet on a slope that he described as "almost perpendicular" in a "back-slipping, bush-clutching struggle . . ." "through tangled vegetation and "incredibly nasty" greenbrier (WWS at 25-26). Upon reaching the crest of the ridge, he camped that night at a nearby gap (probably Sassafras Gap).

Shaffer recounted that after that climb, he "vowed to avoid such foolishness in the future" (WWS at 26). He wrote in WWS that he knew that his decision to climb directly out of the gorge had "jeopardized the entire expedition, instead of saving time" (WWS at 25).

The Nantahala Gorge bushwhack is certainly one of the more dramatic narratives that came out of Shaffer's 1948 hike. Shaffer recognized (in WWS at 25) that he had "jeopardized the entire expedition" by risking injury during that climb.

What is, perhaps, overlooked in the drama of the climb is that Shaffer's decision to not backtrack to the point at which he had lost the AT, but instead try to "save time" by taking what appeared to him be a short cut to the AT, "jeopardized the entire expedition" in a very different way. The Nantahala Gorge bushwhack caused Shaffer to fail to not walk approximately 5 miles of the AT, including Swim Bald, a notable feature of the AT in that area.

So while an amazing feat of strength and obstinance, and a fascinating anecdote, Shaffer's April 15, 1948, bushwhack out of the Nantahala Gorge caused him to knowingly and deliberately skip an additional approximately 5 miles of the AT.

### **C. Tapoco (Fontana Dam): April 17, 1948**

The original route of the AT in its approach to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park ("GSMNP") was along Yellow Creek Mt. to Tapoco, where the Little Tennessee River was crossed, and then entering the GSMNP at Deal's Gap. It traversed the entire length of the main ridge of the Smokies from Deals Gap to Davenport Gap. In 1948, however, the AT was relocated to leave Yellow Mt. at a point app. 2½ miles north (on the AT) of Yellow Creek Gap, cross the Little Tennessee River on Fontana Dam, and join the main crest of the GSMNP and the old AT route at Doe Knob. The abandoned AT route through Tapoco was 23.3 miles in length, while the relocated AT was considerably shorter, at 11.5 miles in length.

In WWS (at 26-28), Shaffer reported spending the night of April 16<sup>th</sup> at a shelter north of Stecoah Gap (which would have been the Cable Gap Shelter).<sup>4</sup> There he met two hikers, one of whom turned out to be the thru-hiker whom he had heard in Jasper had left one week before Shaffer did.

Shaffer reported that the other two hikers left the shelter "at daybreak," that he left later, but caught up to them at "about nine o'clock." He reported AT marking as "extremely poor" as the three hikers reached ". . . a trail junction overlooking the village of Fontana Dam . . ."

In WWS, Shaffer states that "we didn't know which way to go . . ." "at that trail junction, and

that he and the other two hikers went into Fontana Village as they “. . . decided to ask in town.” He reported that in the “town” (presumably Fontana Village) “[n]oone seemed to know,” so they “continued on Yellow Creek Mountain . . . “ based on the maps they were carrying<sup>5</sup> to finally reach Tapoco, but only after travel on that mountain became so difficult that they had to bushwhack off the side of the mountain and finally follow a road the rest of the way to Tapoco.

In Tapoco, Shaffer separated from the other two hikers, and reported he never saw them again. He resupplied at a grocery store and checked for mail at the post office (he had none).<sup>6</sup>

Shaffer would have passed the intersection of the Fontana Dam relocation with the original AT route at a point approximately 2 miles north of Cable Gap Shelter. He made no mention in WWS of reaching or passing any such intersection on April 17<sup>th</sup>, and states (at 27), that

Actually the Trail has been changed to cross Fontana Dam but the marking had not been changed.

SR48 describes April 17<sup>th</sup> as a day on the AT without apparent complications and distinguished by the rare situation of his hiking with the two other hikers. According to SR48, the other two hikers “[s]tarted early . . . “ on April 17<sup>th</sup>, but Shaffer “caught up with them” and they hiked the rest of the day together. The only landmark noted in that narrative is the “. . . passing Fontana Dam about noon,” which is an odd observation for his having walked the ridge top old AT route on Yellow Creek Mt. Shaffer reported arriving at Tapoco “in early evening” where he resupplied. He reported that he continued that day to camp several miles inside the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (“GSMNP”) while the other two hikers stayed at the lodge at Tapoco. He ends his April 17<sup>th</sup> entry in SR48 by noting that he never saw the other two hikers again.<sup>7</sup>

SR48 makes no mention of the Fontana Dam relocation, and reads consistent with WWS except for that reference to their “passing Fontana Dam about noon.”

In Memo No. 3, Avery excuses Shaffer’s failure to hike the new Fontana Dam section of the AT on the basis of his not having a guidebook. In discussing “errors as to location and Trail route,” Avery noted Shaffer’s “. . . missing the relocation at Fontana and going over Parsons and Gregory Bald, which availability of guidebooks would have eliminated . . . ” Shaffer’s failure to follow the Fontana Dam relocation has therefore been long justified on the basis that Shaffer did not know about the relocation. And if Shaffer did not, in fact, know about the relocation, but instead traveled the old AT route, such justification would seem appropriate.

As previously discussed, Shaffer did not have an AT guidebook, and road maps in 1948 were not yet displaying that new AT route. So it does appear from the record that Shaffer would have had no advance information about the Fontana Dam relocation when he hiked through that area on April 17, 1948. But a focus on what information Shaffer would have had of that relocation if he had carried guidebooks is misdirected. Without guidebooks, Shaffer did not have such advance information of any part of the AT route, except for the inexact route shown on road maps. He was following the AT solely by reference to AT blazes and signs. So whether an AT section was old or new is not relevant to an examination of Shaffer’s navigation decisions. What is relevant is where the AT was on the ground and whether it was marked sufficiently for Shaffer to identify and follow it.

The proper inquiry as to Shaffer’s hike on April 17, 1948, does not therefore relate to AT guides. It is rather a question of whether the Fontana Dam relocation was physically in place, blazed and perhaps signed, on April 17, 1948, when Shaffer passed the point on Yellow Creek Mt. where the new AT deviated from the old AT. If that relocation was in place and marked, and if the marking of the former AT route beyond that point obliterated to eliminate confusion, a hiker without a

guidebook, such as Shaffer, would simply follow the marking seamlessly from the old AT onto the new AT. With the only contradictory route information being a small scale road map, a no-guidebook hiker would, ironically, experience less confusion at such a relocation than a hiker with an out-of-date guidebook providing detailed, but incorrect, data.

Was, then, the Fontana Dam relocation in place and marked on April 17, 1948?

Official AT information contradicts Shaffer's assertion in WWS that AT marking had not yet been changed to reflect that relocation when he hiked through the area on April 17, 1948. A description of that relocated AT in the 1950 Guide (at 215) noted that the AT had been relocated by the Fontana Dam route in 1946-47. Official trail data had been published by an April 3, 1948, Supplement to the 1942 Guide, which announced that the Fontana Dam relocation was "accomplished."

According, then, to the well-respected authority of pertinent AT guidebooks, the Fontana Dam relocation was in place and marked when Shaffer walked that section of the AT on April 17, 1948, and had been in place since the preceding year.

Shaffer's narrative of his hike on April 17<sup>th</sup> in LBN (at 15) describes a very different route than the one seemingly described in SR 48 and WWS.

At the intersection of the relocated AT and the old AT on Yellow Creek Mt., a northbound hiker would have seen the old AT continuing ahead on the crest with the new AT turning right, descending off the mountain. At that junction, the old AT, ahead, was the southernmost junction of an 8.5 mile loop trail that passed through Fontana Village and returned to the new AT route. That loop trail left the AT at the point the AT turned off Yellow Creek Mt., proceeded along the crest of Yellow Mt. for 5.25 miles to Green Gap on the former AT, then turned off the ridge at Green Gap on that new graded trail to descend about 900 vertical feet to the upper end of that recreational housing development and 1200' to the store and post office at the center of the community (at 6.6 miles from the AT). From Fontana Village, the loop trail continued, primarily following a paved road, to intersect the new AT route at a point 1.9 miles from Fontana Village. That trail was not maintained as part of the AT system in 1948, but was reportedly maintained by Government Services, Inc., the operator of the Fontana Village development. So although after opening of the new Fontana Dam AT route, the AT white blazes on the abandoned AT on Yellow Creek Mt. were obliterated,<sup>8</sup> the old AT route to Green Gap was probably still a maintained trail.

While WWS and SR48 leave the impression that Shaffer continued ahead on the ridge, Shaffer narrates in LBN that he and the other two hikers dropped "down toward valley" where they passed "took pictures of the reservoir" before reaching a "boat house and throng of autos." That is a description of the 2.18 miles of the relocated AT from the crest of Yellow Creek Mt. to the parking area at the Bee Cove boat dock [Fontana Marina].

From that narrative, it appears that Shaffer, without being aware of any relocation, followed not the old AT along Yellow Creek Mt., but the new blazes of the relocated AT off the mountain to the boat dock parking area.

From that parking area, the relocated AT followed a hard-surfaced road for approximately 0.2 miles before coming to a road intersection where the AT turned right on a hard-surface road (to Fontana Dam) and the Fontana Village loop trail turned left, leading on that road 1.9 miles to Fontana Village.

There were probably signs at that intersection directing motorists (and hikers) to Fontana Village (to the left) and Fontana Dam (to the right) on that road. Since the AT in that area was a new trail, it may be assumed it was well-marked.

Shaffer did not turn right on the AT.

Instead, he turned left, toward Fontana Village. He reported in LBN and SR48 “passing Fontana Dam.” While the road to Fontana Village did not pass by Fontana Dam, it did provide a view of the dam by a power line cut (since overgrown) that is featured in one of Shaffer’s photographs (WWS Index No. 075).

Shaffer then reported in LBN arriving in the “town of Fontana” [Fontana Village] and, from there, followed the AT “on ridges” before arriving at Tapoco at about 5:00 [P.M.]. In a WWS Draft (found in NMAH Box 9, Folder 4), Shaffer went into detail about his efforts to relocate the AT in Fontana. From those descriptions, it appears that Shaffer climbed Yellow Creek Mt. to Green Gap by a maintained trail.

Shaffer’s description of his route on April 17<sup>th</sup> as presented in LBN appears therefore to confirm the existence of the new AT, since the new AT descending the mountain, going by Fontana Lake and the Bee Cove boat dock and parking area is the route described in LBN as the one followed by Shaffer. The account in SR48, while much less detailed, appears to describe a route by the lake in reporting that he “passed Fontana Dam about noon.” The WWS account is less specific than the LBN narrative, but its report that Shaffer was in Fontana Village is consistent with his having followed the new AT off Yellow Creek Mt., then the Fontana Village loop trail into Fontana Village.<sup>9</sup>

It therefore appears that on April 17<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer (and the other two hikers) followed the new AT off Yellow Creek Mt., passed the Bee Cove boat dock and parking area, then turned left (where the AT turned right) to follow the Fontana Village loop trail into Fontana Village. From there, he continued on the loop trail up Yellow Creek Mt. to Green Gap, then followed the abandoned AT on Yellow Creek Mt. to Tapoco.

Why, then, did Shaffer turn left, toward Fontana Village, instead of right, on the AT at that road junction near the Bee Cove parking area?

It cannot be credibly suggested that it was because the AT wasn’t marked. It was, after all, a new trail, presumably with new blazes and, perhaps, signs.

Shaffer therefore must have knowingly and deliberately left the AT at that road junction. Even though he had already turned onto the new AT route and had followed it to that point, he turned left, off the AT, and proceeded to Fontana Village and Tapoco. From there, he followed the abandoned AT route to Doe Knob, where he rejoined the new AT route. By his following that route, instead of the new AT, he failed to walk the 9.01 miles of AT from that road junction, across Fontana Dam, and to Doe Knob, where the new AT route rejoined the former route.

The answer to why Shaffer chose to leave the AT on April 17<sup>th</sup> and instead travel through Fontana Village is that Shaffer turned off the new AT route when he realized it was not going to go through Tapoco. When he realized that the AT was not following the course on his road map, and that it was definitely turning toward a crossing of the Little Tennessee River that would bypass Tapoco, he left the AT and headed for Tapoco because he was expecting to receive mail there.<sup>10</sup>

When Shaffer left the Cable Gap Shelter in the morning of April 17, 1948, he was likely in high spirits. He had caught up with the one hiker he had heard was ahead of him<sup>11</sup>, and his impression

of that hiker and his hiking companion was that neither of them was going to get to Mt. Katahdin ahead of him (if at all). Clearing weather of the day before had turned into what looked like good hiking weather ahead.<sup>12</sup> Ahead, according to his road map, was a relatively direct route to Tapoco. Even without a topographical map he probably figured (correctly) the AT was going to follow the crest of the mountain he was on to Tapoco, with the Little Tennessee River to the right. Ahead was Tapoco, which meant resupply and possibly mail from home, and then into the GSMNP. And getting to Tapoco was going to feel good, because that community served the same role for early AT hikers as Fontana Dam and Fontana Village does for current hikers. It featured a grocery store, a lodge<sup>13</sup>, a post office, and the gateway to the GSMNP at nearby Deal's Gap. Psychologically, it was the welcome end of what for many hikers, including Shaffer, had been a difficult hike through Georgia and southern North Carolina.

After approximately 2 miles, or less than an hour after leaving the shelter (at Shaffer's likely 3 mph pace), Shaffer reached an intersection on the crest of the mountain where, marked by a prominent double blaze, if not two such blazes, and perhaps a new AT mileage sign, an obviously "new" AT turned right, off the mountain. Shaffer had stumbled onto the beginning of the Fontana Dam relocation. The intersection was undoubtedly obvious, just as the trail crew that had constructed and marked it to establish the link between the new AT to the old AT would have meant it to be – even unmistakable.

One might assume he must have paused, looked at his road map, peered down the trail to the right, read any signs that were there, and looked ahead at what looked like a good trail continuing along the ridge toward, according to his map, Tapoco. That new trail sure didn't look like it was headed for Tapoco, or Deals Gap, or the GSMNP.

But Shaffer followed the new blazes, and the new AT, off the mountain, just as he described in LBN. He had no idea where it led, but would have likely assumed it was a rerouting to Tapoco. It would not have been until he reached that road intersection where the AT definitely turned toward Fontana Dam, and an apparent crossing of the Little Tennessee River, that Shaffer would have realized the extent of the relocation: that the AT was taking, in effect, a short-cut across Fontana Dam.

At that point, Shaffer decided to leave the new AT, with its uncertain destination, and go to Fontana Village in a search for the route to Tapoco. Once in Fontana Village, he found his way on the loop trail to Green Gap, again on the crest of Yellow Creek Mt. When he, and the other two hikers, reached Green Gap from Fontana Village, they were likely surprised, and disappointed, to find that the maintained trail they had followed to the crest did not continue toward Tapoco. Instead, it turned the other way on the ridge (back toward the AT). The abandoned AT to the west on the crest had been, even when part of the AT, a private lands section that had been difficult to maintain. So what was ahead for Shaffer was about 5 miles of trail that had tended to be overgrown and poorly marked even when on the AT. After several years of no maintenance or marking at all, that trail continuing along Yellow Creek Mt. from Green Gap was probably not an encouraging sight.

They continued ahead, toward Tapoco. And they finally reached that community, but only after trail conditions became so bad that they were forced to bushwhack off the mountain to a road and then following that road to Tapoco.

When the entire record is reviewed, Shaffer's course of travel and navigational decisions on April 17, 1948, appear clear. He followed the new AT to the hard surface road near the Bee Cove parking area, left the AT at that point and went to Fontana Village, regained the crest of Yellow Creek Mt. at Green Gap via the Fontana Village loop trail, then followed (or attempted to follow) the abandoned AT on Yellow Creek Mt. to Tapoco.

Both SR48 and WWS failed to disclose the physical presence of the Fontana Dam relocation on Yellow Creek Mt. on April 17, 1948. In addition, Shaffer makes the assertion in WWS as to the Fontana Dam relocation that “. . . the marking had not been changed.” As discussed above, that factual assertion is contrary to the history of that relocation as stated in pertinent AT Guides of the period, which establish that the said relocation was constructed in 1946-47 and trail data published on April 3, 1948. Furthermore, the WWS claim that the Fontana Dam relocation was not in place in April 1948 is contradicted by Shaffer’s narrative in LBN as he indicates that he followed the AT off Yellow Creek Mt. That was the relocated AT, and Shaffer followed it until he left it to proceed to Fontana Village and Tapoco.

By his decision to leave the AT and proceed instead to Tapoco on April 17<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer failed to hike the 9.01 miles of AT from the road junction near the Bee Cove parking area to Doe Knob, where the new AT route rejoined the former route.

What is particularly troubling in this case is not just Shaffer’s failure to hike another section of the AT. In fact, if Shaffer had simply followed the old AT route in order to pass through Tapoco and disclosed that decision in his narratives, it would have been difficult to consider that deviation as non-AT travel. What is troubling is Shaffer’s failure to disclose in WWS his following the relocated AT and that he then decided to leave the AT in order to follow a route through Tapoco. If it is true, as the record seems to establish, that Shaffer did follow the new AT route before leaving it near the Bee Cove parking area to instead travel through Fontana Village back to the old AT on Yellow Creek Mt. to Tapoco, it is even more troubling that Shaffer would seemingly address that by his positive assertion in WWS that “. . . the marking had not been changed” when that assertion was not factually correct.

Establishment of Shaffer’s actual knowledge of the Fontana Dam relocation is significant in that his failure to hike that section of relocated AT was specifically recognized and addressed by ATC Myron H. Avery in both his November 23, 1948, Memo No. 3 to the ATC Board and his November 27, 1948, letter to Shaffer.<sup>14</sup> In both, Avery noted Shaffer’s failure to hike the Fontana Dam relocation, but assigned responsibility for that failure to Shaffer not knowing about the relocated AT because of Shaffer’s lack of availability of guidebooks. Avery therefore excused Shaffer’s failure to hike that section of the AT on the basis of his belief that Shaffer did not know about the relocated AT. With review of the entire record, which Avery did not have, it appears that Shaffer did know about that relocated AT, but deliberately failed to hike it beyond the road intersection at the Bee Cove parking area.

#### **D. Summary, Southern North Carolina**

On April 13, 1948, Shaffer failed to hike 5.6 miles of the AT north of Wallace Gap when he took a short-cut by a logging road from Rainbow Springs to a point on the AT 5.6 miles north of Wallace Gap.

On April 15, 1948, Shaffer failed to hike approximately 5 miles of the AT when he chose to bushwhack out of the Nantahala Gorge instead of backtracking to return to the AT after he realized he had strayed from the AT.

On April 17, 1948, Shaffer failed to hike 9.01 miles of AT from the road junction near the Bee Cove parking area to Doe Knob, where the new AT route rejoined the former route, by his decision to leave the AT and proceed instead to Tapoco.

It was 87.3 miles on the 1948 AT from the North Carolina-Georgia line to Doe Knob, in the GSMNP. Shaffer failed to hike approximately 19.6 miles of that AT distance, or 22%.

None of those failures to hike AT mileage were a result of trail conditions or Shaffer not knowing the location of the AT. In each case, Shaffer knew the location of the AT, but made a deliberate decision to not follow the AT.

## CHAPTER 9 SNOWBIRD MOUNTAIN

Shaffer crossed the Big Pigeon River at Waterville, NC, by a cable bridge on April 21, 1948,<sup>1</sup> and spent that night at the home of J. L. Moore (SR48; WWS at 41-42). In LBN (at 19), Shaffer reported that after crossing the cable bridge on April 21<sup>st</sup>, he “. . . carried pack up mtn. Came down and walked to Mt. Sterling [and] bought groceries.” LBN describes Shaffer stopping at “a man’s place at bridge” where they “insisted I spend the night.”<sup>2</sup>

The next day (April 22<sup>nd</sup>), he left the Moore home at about 6:00 a.m.

Shaffer described (in WWS) the AT from the Pigeon River at Waterville as “. . . the Trail slanting upward to Snowbird Mountain, with the path overgrown and marking poor.” He reports losing the AT at the top of the ridge, “near a large tree” where “five woods roads come together, with no indication of which way to go.” Shaffer took the “straight ahead” road leading down the other side of the ridge, through “hill farm” country, where a “seedy-looking man” at a “neglected farm” suggested that Shaffer had “gone astray at ‘Spanish Oak’” Shaffer reported that he then returned to “Spanish Oak,” the road intersection, and “tried all the roads before finding the right one.”

LBN (at 19) describes Shaffer leaving the Moore home at “about 6:00,” that he “[l]ost trail about 8:00,” and “found it again about 10:00,” with “(spanish oak)” inserted into the text at that point above the line. SR48 reports only that Shaffer “. . . lost trail on top of mtn. at Spanish Oak. So while LBN reports that Shaffer lost the AT on his way up the mountain and found it at the “Spanish Oak,” SR48 reports that he lost the Trail at Spanish Oak.

The section of AT from the Pigeon River to the crest of Snowbird Mt. (at Spanish Oak Gap) addressed in those narratives was a 2.96 mile section of graded trail within the Pisgah National Forest constructed by the CCC in 1936-37 (1950 Guide at 159). The Guide trail description noted that the AT, after crossing the Pigeon River, climbed a steep bank just to the right of a house (probably the Moore home), then turned right on a “graded path” (probably the beginning of the CCC-constructed trail). The AT then followed an old railroad grade up the river, passing through a “gap” (probably a railroad grade cut) “with an old path coming in on left at 0.14 m.” From there, the AT continued to follow the old railroad grade upstream, crossing Painter Creek on a bridge at 0.65 miles. At 0.83 miles, at Snowbird Creek, the AT data directed the hiker to “leave railroad grade and *turn sharp left uphill*.” For the next approximately 2 miles, the AT ascended steeply by graded trail up Painter Creek, reaching at 2.96 miles Spanish Oak Gap (1950 Guide at 160-61).<sup>4</sup>

Did Shaffer actually find that relatively new graded trail overgrown and with marking poor on April 22<sup>nd</sup>?

It may be. However, it is not at all clear that Shaffer even followed the AT away from the Pigeon River that morning. Instead, WWS seems to describe the AT route from the Pigeon River as immediately beginning the ascent of Snowbird Mt., as follows:

From Waterville the Trail slanted upward to Snowbird Mountain, with the path overgrown and marking poor.

Shaffer’s reporting in LBN that, on April 21<sup>st</sup>, he first “carried pack up mtn” (presumably to “stash” his pack on the AT) before going into Mt. Sterling for groceries also suggests that Shaffer believed the AT went up the mountain, rather than along the railroad bed up the river, after crossing

the Pigeon River.

The AT Guide noted that an “old path” turned up (“slanted up”) the mountain at 0.14 miles, and the 1940 Waterville Quadrangle shows that path. Shaffer may well have followed that path, instead of the AT along the railroad grade up the river. If so, that would account for Shaffer not mentioning the AT’s course along the river. It would also account for Shaffer describing the path he followed being “overgrown and poorly marked,” since he would have not been on the AT. If he acted consistent with past practice, Shaffer would not have backtracked when the blazes disappeared, but would have instead continued ahead assuming the AT had disappeared.

That path, according to the 1940 Waterville Quadrangle, led to a saddle on the lower slope of Snowbird Mt.<sup>5</sup> from which Shaffer could have made his way up the ridge for approximately 1.6 miles following unmarked and unmaintained paths and/or woods roads to Spanish Oak Gap.<sup>6</sup>

While the AT route up the Pigeon River and then to Spanish Oak Gap by graded trail is not consistent with Shaffer’s description of his travels to the Spanish Oak, his instead straying from the AT after crossing the Pigeon River and instead following unmarked and unmaintained paths and/or woods roads up Snowbird Mt.<sup>7</sup> would match his description of his travels that morning.

Just as described in WWS (at 42), Spanish Oak Gap was the intersection of several roads. The AT (northbound) did not, however, actually reach the crest of the ridge. The 1950 Guide noted that with “a cleared slope ahead and two worn roads on right and one road on left” the reader was directed to “Here take *extreme right fork*, wide road, uphill.” The road to the left was noted as leading to “Gates [actually ‘Cates’] Creek and Naillon.”

Shaffer reported in WWS that he continued “straight ahead” at “the top near a large tree [where] five woods roads come together, with no indication of which way to go.”<sup>8</sup> Assuming that location to be Spanish Oak Gap and that Shaffer was following the AT, he would have then had to walk by the turn onto that first road, which the AT followed. Since the AT was a graded Forest Service Trail and that turn one emphasized in the Guide, marking at that point may have been several years old but it is unlikely it was entirely unmarked. If, having missed the turn, he did not backtrack when the blazes ceased, he would have continued ahead, to the left, through the gap and down the Tennessee side of Snowbird Mt. to Cates Creek.

If, however, he entered Spanish Oak Gap not on the AT, but instead by the ridge crest following paths or old woods roads in a non-AT route from the Pigeon River, he would have seen to the left the road to Cates Creek and to the right the road followed by the AT. But since the AT turned off that road prior to reaching the crest, Shaffer would not have seen any sign of the AT, thereby observing, as he did in WWS, “. . . no indication of which way to go.” His proceeding “straight ahead” would have placed him on the second of the “two worn roads on right” noted in the Guide. Unlike the Cates Creek road tending north-northwest, that road (as shown on the 1940 Waterville Quad) trended west, following the northern slope of Snowbird Mt. app. ½ mile down that road was a hill farm, just as he described in WWS. On the Waterville USGS Quad, several additional clearings and a farm on the upper reaches of Fall Branch are visible beyond that farm. Although the woods road (trail) ends at the first farm, it is very likely that there were some connecting trails or woods roads connecting those farms.

Shaffer’s narrative of his hike to Spanish Oak Gap is therefore much more consistent with his having strayed from the AT at the Pigeon River and reached Spanish Oak Gap not by the AT, but instead by finding his way up the Snowbird Mt. ridge to Spanish Oak Gap.

WWS (at 42) relates a “bushwhacking” anecdote in Shaffer’s travel beyond Spanish Oak

Gap. Shaffer reports (in WWS) that having found the AT at “Spanish Oak,” that

[m]arking beyond was so faint and the route so disrupted that the only way to proceed was by dead reckoning - - keep compass in hand for the frequent checking and head ‘thataway.’

WWS reports that “[m]arking resumed near Max Patch Mountain.”

Shaffer’s narrative in WWS suggests that he lost the AT soon after he finally found his way out of Spanish Oak Gap when “[m]arking beyond was so faint and the route so disrupted that the only way to proceed was by dead reckoning.” He reported that “[m]arking resumed near Max Patch Mountain.” By that narrative, Shaffer reports traveling by “dead reckoning” from a point near the “Spanish Oak” (Spanish Oak Gap) to “near Max Patch Mountain,” with the AT “so faint and the route so disrupted” that the only way to proceed was by such “dead reckoning.”

According to WWS, therefore, the AT in that area had, in effect, disappeared, therefore forcing Shaffer “to bushwhack.”

A reconstruction, however, of Shaffer’s April 22, 1948, hike using all available information raises questions about that anecdote of Shaffer’s “bushwhack” along Snowbird Mt. with a seemingly vanished AT.

At Spanish Oak Gap, the AT began to generally follow Snowbird Mt. and the North Carolina - Tennessee state line. It was 7.88 miles from Spanish Oak Gap to Max Patch Road on the AT, following a graded trail built by the CC in 1936-37. From Deep Gap, at 3.99 miles (where the Groundhog Creek Lean-to was 0.1 miles to the right), a ridgetop trail generally following the crest of Snowbird Mt. and the state line to Max Patch Road.

That trail Shaffer was describing from the Pigeon River to Deep Gap was an 11 year-old National Forest graded trail constructed by the CCC. From Deep Gap to Max Patch Road, it was a ridge top trail. From Spanish Oak Gap, the ridge followed by the AT followed a generally westerly course with swings to the north and south to Brown Gap (3 miles south on the AT from Max Patch Road), where it turned northwest. Snowbird Mt. featured a rugged topography, with multiple knobs, frequent intersecting ridges, and repeated low points. The graded trail frequently slabbed the side of knobs, and used switchbacks to handle the steep ascents and descents along the ridge to Deep Gap. Since the current AT follows the same ridge (with now a graded trail from Deep Gap to Max Patch Road), hikers who have traveled the AT through the Snowbird Mt. area would know of the ruggedness of that terrain.

Shaffer, navigating with only an oil company road map, claims in his WWS narrative to have successfully followed that ridge, with its turnings, for 7 miles or so by “dead reckoning” with a compass and a road map as his only guides.<sup>9</sup> In the course of that travel, he failed to note the existence of the relatively new (11-year-old) graded trail from Spanish Oak Gap to Deep Gap, the Groundhog Creek Shelter (0.1 miles off the AT a Deep Gap), or the ridge top AT from Deep Gap to the Max Patch Road. If his report is correct, the entire AT along that ridge (Snowbird Mt.), along with the shelter in Deep Gap, was simply not to be found by a person traveling that ridge in 1948.<sup>10</sup>

Shaffer reported this extraordinary disappearance of that section of the AT while hiking under very good weather and visibility conditions. On April 22, 1948, high/low temperatures at weather stations in Gatlinburg, TN, and Hot Springs, NC<sup>11</sup>, ranged from high 70's to low 40's-high 30's. It had not rained at either station since April 15<sup>th</sup>, so Shaffer was apparently on his 8<sup>th</sup> day (including his entire hike through the GSMNP) without rain.

It is highly unlikely that Shaffer could have successfully bushwhacked the ridge of Snowbird Mt. as he describes doing in WWS. His road map and compass, while useful for determining general direction, would have been useless along that twisting, turning, undulating ridge. Even with pre-GPS full bushwhacking navigation gear (i.e., 7.5' topo map, compass and altimeter), it would be very difficult to follow that ridge without a trail, as Shaffer seems to claim he did, without either “falling off” the ridge into one of the valleys on either side or going astray on one of the intersecting ridges. And even with use of a modern GPS, with preset waypoints along the ridge to guide the bushwhacker, the rugged topography would make such a course of travel very frustrating and difficult, particularly with a full backpack.

It is notable that neither the LBN or SR48 reports such a bushwhack. Like WWS, SR48 reports that Shaffer “lost trail on top of mtn. at “Spanish Oak” because a “[t]urn was not properly marked” and “[l]ost several hours before getting straightened out.” He further reported having more trouble during the afternoon “with faint marking.” But unlike WWS, Shaffer reports no bushwhack by use of a compass beyond the “Spanish Oak” on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. In LBN (at 19), Shaffer reports “Trail poorly marked. Snarled several times.” But from the context, it appears that description references not the AT beyond Spanish Oak Gap, but rather the AT from the Pigeon River to Spanish Oak Gap. As previously discussed, Shaffer may have traveled an off-AT route between those two points, which would be consistent with such a description. But in any event, LBN reports no extended bushwhack by use of compass as is found in WWS.

With an established AT along Snowbird Mt., with such good weather and visibility, and with no support in the LBN or SR48 narratives, Shaffer’s story in WWS of a vanished AT (and shelter) and a several mile bushwhack using a compass for direction along Snowbird Mt. is probably a substantially exaggerated anecdotal account of Shaffer’s actual trail experience between Spanish Oak Gap and Max Patch Road on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Depending on the level of post WWII National Forest maintenance, blazing along the section may have been several years old. But it was certainly a blazed trail. Being a CCC-constructed graded trail to Deep Gap and a ridge top trail beyond to Max Patch Road, the trail route would have been unmistakable even if blocked by downed trees or brushy. Such a trail does not “vanish” in 11 years to the extent that a traveler along the ridge would not recognize it when intercepting it.

There is an interesting alternative explanation that would concede the accuracy of Shaffer’s anecdote while recognizing the existence of the AT along Snowbird Mt. in 1948. What, remarkably, fits Shaffer’s WWS narrative about that bushwhack best is the possibility that Shaffer did bushwhack, with compass in hand, from some point near the “Spanish Oak” to a point where the “[m]arking resumed near Max Path Mountain,” but that travel was not on Snowbird Mt. and not along the AT route. Instead, Shaffer may have strayed off the AT at Spanish Oak Gap (or missed it completely, if he traveled the non-AT route from the Pigeon River to Spanish Oak Gap), but did not backtrack.<sup>12</sup> Instead, he wandered through several hill farms in the Grassy Fork and Gulf Fork valleys before intercepting the AT further north at Deep Gap, Brown Gap or even near Max Patch Mt., by the maze of old roads and trails appearing on the 1940 USGS Waterville 7.5' Quadrangle. While a compass would be of little value on the ridge, it would be very useful in navigating through the many intersections encountered as one made their way toward the ridge ahead.

The SR48 narrative of losing the AT at the “Spanish Oak” and thereafter losing “several hours before finally getting straightened out” is entirely consistent with his having strayed off the AT and continued ahead to find it again, rather than backtracking.

Regardless of Shaffer’s actual course of travel on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Spanish Oak Gap - Max Patch Road bushwhack was not likely along a vanished AT, as Shaffer seems to report. He may have traveled that section of AT and simply related an exaggerated anecdote of his experiences of that day

in WWS. Or, it may be that he wasn't on the AT, but instead had failed to backtrack when he strayed from the AT and was making his own way back to the AT. Examples abound of such off-AT travel, and several are discussed in this report.

If he traveled the non-AT route into Spanish Oak Gap, missed the AT there because it was on the other side of the ridge, then continued ahead to intercept the AT at Deep Gap or beyond, he could well have failed to hike 7-12 miles of the AT. With the uncertainty surrounding his actual course of travel, however, this report will not consider any of that as possibly skipped AT mileage.

This discussion of Shaffer's travels on Snowbird Mt. on April 22, 1948, is included in this Report because it is the only report of Shaffer having to bushwhack for any substantial distance along an established section of the AT in the southern Appalachians.<sup>13</sup> Given his assertion in the memorandum he submitted as part of SR48 that "[s]everal times I found the Trail practically non-existent and was forced to bushwhack," it was deemed useful to place that assertion against the context of his actual reported experiences in the southern Appalachians.

## CHAPTER 10 THE WATAUGA RIVER VALLEY (TENNESSEE)

After his confused travel through Spanish Oak Gap and along Snowbird Mt. on April 22, 1948 (see Chapter 9), Shaffer rejoined the AT near Max Patch Mt. and reached Hot Springs, NC, on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. From there, he reported a relatively uneventful hike along the AT as it generally followed the NC/TN state line. He crossed the Nolichucky River on April 26, 1948, and camped near the river that night. On April 27<sup>th</sup>, he reached Unaka Mt., where the 1948 AT turned off the main ridge to begin the crossing of the Watauga River valley to Holston Mt.

Shaffer's apparently uneventful navigation along the AT on April 23 - 26, 1948, demonstrates the practicability of traveling the AT during that era without use of a guidebook. He was, however, beginning to experience the problem of annual growth on the AT in the South. As discussed in Chapter 5, annual growth in the South was a major navigational nuisance.

One of the more notorious sections of the AT in the southern Appalachians for annual growth was the 19.25 miles of AT along the NC/TN line between Devils Fork Gap and Spivey Gap. AT guidebooks of that era warned hikers of the difficulties of coping with that annual growth. The problem was not losing the AT, since it was blazed. Instead, it was the problem of moving through the annual growth along the AT.<sup>1</sup> Shaffer passed through that area on April 25 and 26, 1948, and described that area as "The Brier and Barbwire Country" in WWS (at 45).

Shaffer did not, however, report any serious obstruction to travel along that section of the AT. He reported only a succession of difficult fence crossings and some difficulty with marking north of Sams Gap. The only other annual growth problem he reported was on Unaka Mt. on April 27th, where a fire years before had effectively destroyed all vegetation and left the area subject to prolific brier growth.

Shaffer navigated that section without any reported problem with finding or following the AT. As he reported in SR48, Shaffer did, in fact, do "fairly well on road maps," without use of a guidebook.

On April 27, 1948, Shaffer left the state line ridge to begin the crossing of the Watauga River valley to Holston Mt., where the AT recommenced a ridge line course along Holston and Iron Mts. that would carry it to Byllesby, on the New River in Virginia, where the AT turned south to cross the New River valley.

This Report will reconstruct from the available record Shaffer's 1948 course of travel through those two valleys. Shaffer's inability, or unwillingness, to follow the AT through those two valleys is a remarkable, and even defining, aspect of his 1948 hike. When the AT was a forest trail along mountain ridges where one would expect any lack of marking or maintenance to confuse the route and create the need for "bushwhacking," Shaffer did not often report navigational problems. But, as will be seen, Shaffer strayed from the AT literally within minutes of beginning both the Watauga and New River valley crossings and his course of travel through both valleys was characterized by substantial and often confused non-AT travel. The extent, the apparent causes, and the nature of Shaffer's non-AT travel through the Watauga and New River valleys on, respectively, April 27 - 29 and May 4-5, 1948, will be the focus of this chapter (as to the Watauga Valley) and Chapter 11 (the New River Valley).

## A. Simerly Creek Road (McKinney Gap): April 27 - 28, 1948

On April 27, 1948, Shaffer descended on the AT from Unaka Mt. to reach the community of Limestone Cove and Tn. 107, in Carter County, Tn.

SR48 is very brief as to his travels in Limestone Cove on April 27<sup>th</sup>. It simply noted that after crossing Unaka Mt., he “[w]ent down Simerly Creek and turned off to camp in the bush.” His description for the next day (April 28) notes only that he “[f]ollowed road to Hampton.” LBN (at 43) recounts Shaffer coming to a “little town, shopped store, followed Simerly Creek road, turned off and bedded on hill.” He then reported in LBN that the next morning, he “went back to road and followed to hard road which I followed to Hampton.”

From those narratives, it would appear that Shaffer followed the AT from Limestone Cove to Hampton, camping the night of April 27 along Simerly Creek. In fact, both the 1942 and 1950 Guides identify a campsite, with spring, 0.8 miles north of Limestone Cove on Simerly Creek Rd. which would seem to fit Shaffer’s narrative of camping “in the bush” that night.

Shaffer presents, however, a strikingly different narrative in WWS (at 48-49). In that account, Shaffer notes stopping at a store in Limestone Cove and having “a man who was familiar with the Trail<sup>2</sup>” apparently respond to Shaffer’s inquiry about the location of the AT by pointing to a “battered sign on a fence post across the road” (apparently an AT sign indicating the Simerly Creek Rd. route). Shaffer then related being told by a customer at another store in the community that the AT followed Simerly Creek Rd. But he also noted that “some said it followed the ridge top,” and that he “chased the ridge top rumor.<sup>3</sup>”

Based on that rumor, and ignoring the direction he had been given and the AT sign identifying Simerly Creek Rd. as the AT, Shaffer (as best can be reconstructed from old maps) apparently turned off Simerly Creek Rd. onto what is now Upper Stone Mt. Rd., then followed it for about a mile up the mountain apparently looking for the trail to the top of Stone Mt. When he didn’t find that trail, and certainly realizing by then he was not on the AT, he did not backtrack to Simerly Creek Rd. Instead, he found his way northeast, crossing a low ridge (where he may have camped) over to Piney Grove Rd. which he followed further northeast to rejoin Simerly Creek Rd., and the AT, at a point 3.59 miles north (on the AT) of the point he had turned off Simerly Creek Rd. the day before near Limestone Cove.

When read with WWS, the LBN account suggests the same experience in that it recounts Shaffer going “. . . back to road and followed to hard road which I followed to Hampton.” That suggests, like the WWS account, a more complicated route than the suggestion in SR48 that Shaffer merely left Simerly Creek Rd., camped in the bush, and returned to the road where he left it.

Shaffer’s description in WWS of his traveling through the hill farms of that remote area, with his comment that it “was like stepping back a hundred years,” makes the point that failing to follow the AT in that era could be a culturally interesting experience. But as to hiking the AT, Shaffer again showed his unwillingness to backtrack when he realized he had lost the AT, his tendency instead to continue ahead in an attempt to pick the AT up at a later point, and his apparent cavalier attitude about missing sections of the AT during such non-AT travel.

As a result of Shaffer’s leaving the AT and Simerly Creek Rd. on April 27<sup>th</sup>, but not returning to the point at which he had left it when he realized he had lost the AT, Shaffer “walked around” a section of the AT on Simerly Creek Rd. (through McKinney Gap) 3.59 miles in length.

## **B. Hampton: April 28 - 29, 1948**

After returning to the AT after the McKinney Gap misdirection, Shaffer arrived in Hampton, TN, at about noon on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

The AT following U.S. 19E (west) into Hampton in 1948, and continued to follow it through and west from Hampton. Its route following U.S. 19E was obvious on road maps. Also obvious on road maps was the intersection of Tn. 67 with U.S. 19E in Hampton, with Tn. 67 leading north while U.S. 19E led west from that town. With the AT following such a prominent highway west on a road map, and Tn. 67 so obviously not the AT on such a map, the choice between the two roads to an AT hiker would seem as obvious as those roads were on the map.

Shaffer, though, left Hampton on April 28<sup>th</sup> not west on U.S. 19E following the AT, but instead north on Tn. 67.

His confusion in Hampton began when he left U.S. 19E to look for a shoe shop at which to get his boots resoled.<sup>4</sup> He had lunch while waiting for that work to be completed.

In LBN (at 43), Shaffer reported that after getting his boots resoled, he “. . . went up wrong road and got off trail.” Both SR48 and WWS (at 49) report that no one in Hampton seemed to know anything about the AT.<sup>5</sup> In SR48, he blamed his turn north on Tn. 67 instead of traveling west on U.S. 19E on the absence of a “trail sign at the intersection.”

Shaffer thereby became so confused in Hampton that he followed Tn. 67 north out of town. That navigation decision was contrary both to the clear route of the AT on U.S. 19E as shown on his road map as well as to the obvious fact on that same map that the AT did not follow Tn. 67. In WWS (at 49), Shaffer indicated his awareness of the AT route from his map in his comment that no one in Hampton knew anything about the AT going “through as indicated on my road map.” But based on whatever impressions he got in Hampton, Shaffer followed T. 67 out of Hampton, thereby straying from the AT.

Shaffer was apparently aware that he was no longer on the AT by the time he reached the Watauga Dam impoundment (then under construction), app. 3 miles north of Hampton. In WWS (at 49), Shaffer reported that when he reached that area, “[a] grocery store and service station was still operating and I stopped for information, suspecting the Trail lay beyond the long, high ridge to my left.” In both LBN (at 43) and WWS, Shaffer described receiving information about a trail over that mountain.

Shaffer was then several miles north of Hampton. He knew he was not on the AT, and that he had lost it in Hampton. He could easily hitchhike back into Hampton to regain the AT where he had left it without any great loss of time.

Shaffer did not, however, backtrack. Instead, based on that information about a trail that would take him across that mountain to intercept the AT on the other side, Shaffer set out to find a way over the mountain to the west (Iron Mt.) to rejoin the AT that he “suspected” was on the other side of the ridge.<sup>6</sup>

It is difficult to determine how far he traveled on Tn. 67 (apparently walking the entire distance), but it may have been as far as the community of Butler. He reported in WWS (at 49) that “rain began falling” as he started up the mountain.<sup>7</sup> Shaffer attempted to bushwhack up Iron Mt., but failed and spent the night in reported rainy weather on the porch of an old cabin on the slope of the mountain. The next morning (April 29<sup>th</sup>) he described “desperately trying to bushwhack” in another

attempt to reach the crest (likely attempting to reach the crest of Iron Mt. near the current location of the AT Vandeventer Shelter)<sup>8</sup>, but failed and returned to Tn. 67. He then walked and hitchhiked back to Hampton, where he finally followed U.S. 19E (and the AT) west (WWS at 49-50). He then located the AT (where he could not on the previous day) and followed it to a camp that night (April 29<sup>th</sup>) on the slope of Holston Mt. at a “ramshackle leanto” (probably about 3½ miles north of Winner, on Tn. 91). Shaffer reported in WWS that “most of his supplies” were ruined by a mouse that night (WWS at 52).

Shaffer had again displayed, as he did in the case of the Nantahala Gorge, his impatience with following the AT, his refusal to backtrack when he lost the AT, a quick tendency to strike out on his own route, and his confidence in his strength as a hiker and in his obstinacy to get him through challenging situations. But what is also seen is that same cavalier attitude toward skipping a part of the AT seen in his past off-AT travels. If he had been successful at crossing Iron Mt., he would have skipped about 12 miles of the AT, depending on his exact route in crossing the mountain.

# CHAPTER 11 THE NEW RIVER VALLEY (VIRGINIA)

## A. Introduction

After following Holston Mt. to Damascus, VA., the 1948 AT turned east and followed the Iron Mountains 58.6 miles to the crest of Farmers Mt., overlooking Byllesby Dam on the New River. At Farmers Mt., the AT turned in a southerly direction to shift its general route from the Iron Mountains to cross the New River Valley in a southerly direction before turning northeast along the Blue Ridge escarpment at Fisher Peak. In order to accomplish that shift, the AT turned south at Farmers Mt., reached the New River at Byllesby Dam, followed and then crossed the New River to reach Galax, Va. (at 11.55 AT miles from Byllesby). From Galax, the AT continued south, crossing the Blue Ridge Parkway (“BRP”) just north of the North Carolina line, then swung south of the Parkway to reach Fisher Peak (at 24.25 miles) before turning northeast to follow secondary roads to intersect Va. 97 at Pipers Gap (at 32.23 miles).

The westerly direction of the AT from Damascus was so pronounced that at Farmers Mt., the Trail was only a few miles further north than Damascus. The southerly extent of that shift from the Iron Mountains to the Blue Ridge escarpment caused the AT to briefly reenter North Carolina and reach a point, at Fisher Peak, where the AT was further south than the Maple Springs Fire Trail, nearly 100 miles south on the AT (and where Shaffer spent the night of April 30<sup>th</sup>).

This chapter will follow Shaffer’s 1948 hike from Byllesby through Galax to Pipers Gap.

## B. Byllesby - Galax: May 4, 1948

On May 1, 1948, Shaffer had crossed into Virginia and reached Damascus, Va. But he didn’t apparently spend much time in Damascus after arriving there in the early afternoon.<sup>1</sup> Even though there was a May Day celebration going on, he reported in WWS (at 53) that he “stopped at a gas station to get a road map and at a grocery store for supplies.” He likely visited the post office, although he didn’t report that. But he apparently left without an extensive visit as he hiked an additional 6½ miles before spending as much as a “couple of hours” talking to the fire tower man at Feathercamp Lookout before camping about a mile beyond that lookout (per SR48).<sup>2</sup>

Shaffer’s 1948 hike is difficult to follow from Damascus to Byllesby. There are very few references to identifiable features in Shaffer’s writings about those 2½ days from Damascus to Jones Knob. SR48 mentions only a fire tower north of Damascus<sup>3</sup> on May 1, the crossing of Va. 16 on May 2<sup>nd</sup><sup>4</sup>, and another fire tower<sup>5</sup> on May 3<sup>rd</sup><sup>6</sup> a mile beyond which he camped on May 3. For May 4<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer notes his passing through the farm of “Jackson,” a retired Forest Service employee,<sup>7</sup> and his descent from Farmers Mt. to Byllesby Dam. WWS (at 53-55) also fails to provide much detail about those days.

Shaffer did note in his narratives that it was cold and windy on May 2-3, 1948. Weather station records for Damascus, Sugar Grove and Byllesby for the period<sup>8</sup> indicate no precipitation for the period May 1-3, 1948. Temperature records available for Sugar Grove indicate highs and lows of 79° - 38° on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 79° - 45° on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 68° - 56° on May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

One of the few specific points identified by Shaffer through that distance was the ridge overlooking the New River that he reached on May 4<sup>th</sup>. That ridge was Farmers Mt., where the Iron Mountains range reached the New River. From the crest of that ridge, the AT turned SSW to descend to Byllesby. Byllesby and Buck Dams together constitute a two-dam hydroelectric facility

on the New River that early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were also communities, but by 1948 were well on their way to being depopulated as operation of the dams no longer required resident employees. The 1950 Guide indicated the presence of a number of “cottages” in the area, suggested seasonal residences.

An N & W Railroad branch line passed through Byllesby in 1948. That railroad bed is now the rail trail of the New River State Park (“NRT”), with Byllesby at NRT 37.3. That railroad extended from the main line at Pulaski through Byllesby to Fries Junction, 2.5 miles upriver from Byllesby, where one line crossed the New River to extend 12 miles to Galax while another continued upriver 5.5 miles to Fries.<sup>9</sup>

After descending Farmers Mt. first by ungraded trail, then by a woods road, the AT crossed the railroad and immediately intersected Virginia Secondary Road (“VSR”) 737 (Ivanhoe Rd.)<sup>10</sup>, an unimproved secondary road that ran beside the New River. The AT turned right (upstream) on VSR 737. That road turned right after 0.1 miles to cross the railroad at Byllesby. As VSR 737 turned to cross the railroad, access roads to the lake were to the left and a driveway continued ahead to a Byllesby Dam residence structure. After crossing the railroad, VSR 737 (and the AT) immediately turned left, beside the railroad. As VSR 737 turned left, VSR 602 (Byllesby Rd.), an improved secondary road, continued ahead, climbing out of the river valley.<sup>11</sup> After turning left, VSR 737 (and the AT) passed between the railroad on the left (which was beside the river) and the brick Byllesby Substation on the right, then veered right, away from the railroad, ascending slightly to run along the slope above the railroad grade.

By a fortunate coincidence, Byllesby, as Shaffer saw it on May 4, 1948, is shown in a photograph taken by Shaffer from the crest of Farmers Mt., just before he turned down the side of that mountain on the AT toward Byllesby. That photograph is WWS Index No. 200 (Slide No. 9). Unfortunately, the original slide was apparently scanned in reverse for the DVD. That can be seen from the river being shown on the right (west) of the railroad in that photograph while the actual view would feature Byllesby Dam and lake to the left (east) of the railroad. However, even with the awkward process of viewing a reversed image, that photograph shows the road that was part of the AT’s descent from Farmers Mt. intersecting VSR 737(now VSR 602) in the lower portion of the photograph (with the river channel dry but with visible ponded water). VSR 737 can be seen then turning to cross the railroad, then immediately turning left beside the railroad with VSR 602 continuing past (in front of) the large brick structure of the Byllesby Substation. Between the railroad and the Substation can be seen VSR 737 (and the AT) as it veers off from the railroad to follow a more elevated course up the valley.

From Byllesby, therefore, the AT (north) followed VSR 737, with the railroad below and to the left of the road. The AT route on VSR 737 beside the railroad was most certainly marked with an AT metal marker or white blaze, since it had been an important intersection on the AT since the Trail’s original routing on that course in 1931. If it was renewed in the 1947 ATC “reblazing” project, discussed above (*see*, Page 5-3) it would have been a newer blaze. But more recent or old, the road was undoubtedly marked as the AT.<sup>12</sup>

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer would have been at the railroad crossing on VSR 737 in Byllesby, looking upriver with the railroad and that road ahead of him. He had traveled about 10 miles<sup>13</sup> that day before reaching Byllesby. He noted in SR48 that it was a “cold and gusty day,” and reported rain that morning in WWS (at 54). He recounted turning up “across ridge to a point overlooking Byllesby Dam,” then “descending to town.” Assuming he got an early start and that he did not delay long while talking to a “Jackson” whose farm he crossed,<sup>14</sup> Shaffer probably reached Byllesby about noon or so.

As he prepared to leave Byllesby, Shaffer had reason to feel satisfaction over his pace over the past few days. He had covered 60.75 miles of the AT on May 1-3, and had put 71.25 miles of

the AT behind him since May 1<sup>st</sup> as he stood in Byllesby. Galax was 11.5 miles away by an easy walk up the river valley, then by secondary road to Galax. Ending the first day of his second month on the AT in Galax, and reaching what he figured was the one-quarter mark on the AT, was well within reach, and only one day behind the one month schedule of reaching that point on a four-month AT hike.

But with Galax an easy 11.5 miles away on the AT, Shaffer instead walked out of Byllesby not on VSR 737 and the AT, but instead on the N & W Railroad.

In LBN (at 48), Shaffer's only statement about his travel through Byllesby that he "followed summit till overlooking Byllesby dam<sup>15</sup>," "[t]ook pic and went down, followed RR about five miles to Fries, lost trail . . ."

In SR48, Shaffer reported hiking turning up "across ridge to a point overlooking Byllesby Dam," then "descend[ed] to town, bought some supplies<sup>16</sup>, went on along railroad next to river to Fries." He reported that it was "[r]aining heavily"<sup>17</sup> and that he ". . . [l]ost the Trail in Fries."

In WWS (at 55) Shaffer reported that the AT "turned up Farmers Mountain, overlooking Byllesby Dam," then turned "southward along the railroad and New River for about six miles to Fries Junction . . ."

Shaffer therefore makes no mention of following, or attempting to follow, the AT from Byllesby in either LBN or SR48, but instead reports following the railroad to Fries where he indicates he lost the AT. Mention of the AT is seen only in WWS. It does not therefore appear that Shaffer was relying on AT marking when he left Byllesby. Instead, he apparently was focused on Fries in the apparent belief that he could just walk the railroad to that town, regardless of whether the AT followed it or not, and pick the AT up in Fries.

Shaffer had apparently come to believe that Fries was on the AT, and that the railroad was the faster and surer way to Fries.

How then did Shaffer pick Fries as his AT destination on May 4<sup>th</sup>? Since he was navigating with a road map, his belief that Fries was on the AT must have come from a road map. As has been discussed, what brand of oil company map Shaffer was using is not known. However, a review of selected General Drafting Company (Esso) and Rand McNally & Company (Gulf, Texaco, Sinclair<sup>18</sup>) maps of that area from the late 1940's indicates that Fries and Galax were the only communities identified in the immediate vicinity of the indicated AT route. Both types of maps showed the AT crossing the New River downstream of Fries. The Rand McNally map more clearly indicated that the AT crossed the New River well downstream of Fries but did not indicate whether the crossing was by ferry or not, while the General Drafting map brought the AT nearer Fries but identified the river crossing as a ferry.

In the case of all maps, Galax appears as the most definite AT destination. The logical route for an AT hiker from any point downstream of Galax<sup>19</sup> would be to move upstream for 4-6 miles, then look for the AT crossing of the New River to reach Galax. That obvious crossing point would have been the Dixon Ferry site and it would have therefore merited close inspection. Upstream, there was a road route shown between Fries and Galax with a "Fy" (ferry) crossing of the river indicated on both types of maps.

Regardless of what map Shaffer was using, it is therefore difficult to see how Shaffer became focused on Fries as he left Byllesby. That error was then compounded by his selection of the railroad from Byllesby as his route to Fries, a choice that is also difficult to understand because none of the road maps reviewed showed railroads. The railroad had no AT markings because it wasn't the route

of the AT. Shaffer's navigational history suggests that he probably reacted to the absence of blazes not by backtracking and considering the parallel road as a possible AT route, but rather by deciding the AT had disappeared and that he was on his own as far as navigation was concerned. So he pushed on for Fries, likely paying little attention to his surroundings in his focus on Fries.

As Shaffer followed the railroad upriver from Byllesby,<sup>20</sup> the AT was following VSR 737, to the right and above the railroad. At 2.15 miles (from Byllesby), the road the AT was following crossed the railroad, crossed Brush Creek on a bridge beside the railroad bridge,<sup>21</sup> then continued upstream between the railroad and Byllesby Lake to Fries Junction,<sup>22</sup> at 2.7 miles, where the railroad split. One branch crossed the New River and ran to Galax, while the other continued up the river to Fries.

The road and AT crossed the railroad at Fries Junction, then climbed above the railroad,<sup>23</sup> reached a road junction at 3.15 miles,<sup>24</sup> recrossed the railroad at 3.3 miles and then followed a "wide and well-worn" path<sup>25</sup> (1950 Guide) between the railroad and river to a "bridge over brook" at 4.15 miles with a trail coming in from the right. Beyond that point to another brook with another trail entering from the right<sup>26</sup> at 4.85 miles, the old roadbed was a narrow path. Above that point, the old roadbed was apparently completely washed out, and the AT followed the railroad for 1.2 miles (to 6.05 miles from Byllesby), where the AT turned off the railroad on an old road to reach, at 6.15 miles, the New River at the former Dixons Ferry.<sup>27</sup> While there was no longer a ferry in operation by 1948, the 1950 Guide indicated that a local resident who lived on the other side of the river would ferry hikers across the river.

The AT therefore followed a road from Byllesby toward Dixons Ferry that, in 1948, left Byllesby as a state-maintained secondary road, continued as an unmaintained but distinct roadbed beyond Brush Creek (2.15 miles) to 3.15 miles, then continued upstream on a narrowing path beside the railroad to 4.85 miles. Above that point, the AT followed the railroad to Dixons Ferry, where the AT turned off the railroad to cross the New River. That old road crossed and recrossed, frequently ran immediately beside, and finally joined the railroad that Shaffer was following from Byllesby to Fries.

Despite the close relationship between the road followed by the AT and the railroad, Shaffer does not mention any part of that road in any of his narratives. His attention was apparently exclusively on the railroad, with all his comments in LBN, SR48 and WWS relating to that railroad.

It appears that once Shaffer determined, by whatever means, that the AT went through Fries, he therefore decided to reach Fries by the railroad rather than the AT. He must have assumed that wherever the AT was, the railroad was presumably a more direct, and faster, route to Fries. The problem with that assumption was, of course, that the AT didn't go to Fries, so Shaffer walked past the AT turn-off to Dixons Ferry. So by following the railroad, rather than VSR 737 and the AT, from Byllesby, and then apparently thereafter ignoring that road as he continued on the railroad, Shaffer was not merely failing to hike several miles of the AT. With his focus on Fries, and his lack of concern as to the actual route of the AT, his initial navigational decision in Byllesby to follow the railroad was the start of a cascading series of navigational misjudgements that carried him past Dixons Ferry, off the AT, and into Fries.

By not starting out on the AT route from Byllesby on VSR 737, he had no opportunity to note the nature of AT marking on that section of the AT and know what to look for to follow the AT as he continued to hike. As discussed previously as to his off-AT travel in Georgia, the AT's marking was then, as it is now, oriented toward the point of view of a person following the Trail, not a person looking for it from the side or crossing it while traveling other routes (such as roads or, in this case, railroads). With Shaffer leaving the Jefferson National Forest AT and entering a private lands section, marking may well have been less obvious. If he had followed the AT on VSR 737 out of Byllesby,

rather than the railroad, he would have viewed markings from the intended direction and may well have become oriented to the manner and appearance of that section's marking so as to be more successful in recognizing and following the AT. Instead, as he did not see any markings on the railroad for several miles, he may have assumed the AT had "disappeared."

Apparently, Shaffer at least briefly reconsidered his focus on Fries at Fries Junction. In the WWS draft,<sup>28</sup> Shaffer relates that upon learning (probably from a conversation at the Fries Junction Station) that the left branch of the railroad led to Galax, he

. . . was tempted to play it safe and follow the tracks [to Galax].  
~~Before the day was over I was wishing fervently that I did.~~<sup>29</sup>

But, upon that brief reconsideration, he still continued to walk the other branch of the railroad toward Fries.

After about 2 more miles (about 6 miles from Byllesby), VSR 606, an unimproved secondary road, coming from the river crossed the railroad, then turned left to continue ahead on the right of the railroad.<sup>30</sup> There was undoubtedly either a 1947, or an older, AT blaze, or metal marker, at that point. At this point, the railroad and AT emerged from the steep-sided valley traveled from Byllesby into an area of broader, agricultural bottomlands. A glance to the left, down the road toward the river, would have seen that road running down to the river through agricultural fields, and the continuation of that road appearing on the opposite bank leaving the river. There were very likely one or more "johnboats" moored in that vicinity. It would have looked like a ferry crossing, but without any sign of a ferryboat.

This was Dixons Ferry. The AT turned off the railroad at that point and crossed the New River.

From the absence of comments in Shaffer's writings, he apparently failed to note the AT turning off the railroad and failed to note, or walk down to investigate, the obvious river crossing to his left. Instead, he continued toward Fries on the railroad.

There is a hint in the WWS draft<sup>31</sup> that Shaffer may have noticed blazes on the railroad as the AT joined it above Fries Junction. If he did, he must have interpreted those blazes as confirmation that his proper destination was Fries because he noted (at 65) ". . . that marking faded near Fries." As has been seen at other points on the AT, Shaffer did not backtrack when marking "faded."

There is also a suggestion in that WWS Draft that it may have occurred to Shaffer at some point that, with or without knowing where the AT was, that getting across the river and heading for Galax was the proper course, not going to Fries. In the WWS Draft, he noted that "[o]ff to my left<sup>32</sup> was the river, but no bridge could be found.<sup>33</sup>" The AT crossing would have been of interest not just to an AT hiker, but also to any person walking up the railroad looking for a way across the river. But there is no hint in Shaffer's writings that he came to understand that his proper action to find the AT was not walking toward Fries, but an active search for a way across the New River. What he did was continue ahead on the railroad toward Fries.

Shaffer, then, walked past the inactive Dixons Ferry site and continued upriver on the railroad, with the road (probably unimproved) from Dixons Ferry now beside the railroad to the right,<sup>34</sup> no longer on the AT. About a mile from Dixons Ferry, VSR 606 turned left, across the railroad, with a road continuing to Fries turning right at that point. At that point, VSR 606 was part of the then-main road from Fries to Galax. Approximately 0.1 to the left, VSR 606 crossed Blair Ferry, which was apparently an active daytime ferry across the New River at that time.<sup>35</sup> From the absence of comments in Shaffer's writings, he apparently failed to take any interest in that well-

traveled road and ferry to his left. Instead, he continued toward Fries on the railroad.

After 8 miles of walking the N & W Railroad from Byllesby to Fries, with rain becoming heavier as he hiked, Shaffer reached downtown Fries in a heavy rain (1948 Shaffer Report, WWS at 55, LBN at 48). He apparently continued to believe throughout that 8 mile hike, including the first four miles and the last two miles featuring no blazes or AT markers, that Fries was on the AT. He reported (in SR48 and LBN at 48) that he “lost the Trail at Fries.”

Shaffer reported in WWS (at 55) that “[n]o one in Fries seemed to know anything about the Trail.” That was not surprising, for Fries was not on, or near, the AT.

Despite such lack of knowledge about the AT, Shaffer was greeted in Fries by an apparent abundance of community concern and assistance. Not all the advice he received was useful, even if well-meant. In what may be one of the most sadly humorous incidents on his 1948 hike, Shaffer’s inquiries as to the location of the “Appalachian Trail” in Fries were heard by one resident as a request for directions to a nearby transmission line owned by Appalachian Power Company, the local utility. Based on those well-meaning directions, Shaffer reported in SR48 that he “. . . wasted several hours” apparently exploring the route of a nearby transmission line before realizing his error.<sup>36</sup>

Shaffer finally ended up back in downtown Fries at some point. After all the confusion in Fries, he apparently consulted his map, finally disabused himself of his Fries focus, and belatedly selected Galax as the obvious point at which to find the AT. In WWS, Shaffer reports that “one man said a ferry operated to Galax but not this late.” The ferry referred to was the ferry (Blair Ferry) that he had passed, and apparently ignored, earlier that day on his way to Fries.

Shaffer did finally leave Fries that evening to travel to Galax.

In SR48 as presented to the ATC, Shaffer notes only that he “[f]inally went roundabout by road to Galax.” How he “went” by road was left ambiguous in that report to the ATC. One might read that as his having accepted a ride in a motor vehicle. But in the context of a report to the ATC seeking recognition as the first AT thru-hiker, that travel would surely be on foot.

In contrast to the ambiguity of the SR48 report, LBN (at 48) unambiguously noted that “. . . finally man took me roundabout to Galax, where I took room in tourist home.”

In WWS, Shaffer provided more detail of his experience in Fries and his travel to Galax on May 4. In WWS (at 55) Shaffer describes how in Fries he was confronted (and confounded) that “[n]o one in Fries seemed to know anything about the Trail,” that he wanted to get to Galax, but that the ferry across the river to Galax did not run that “late in the evening,” and that it was raining, and cold.

In Fries, he visited a store and was befriended by the storekeeper. In WWS (at 55), Shaffer describes how, when the store closed, the storekeeper invited Shaffer to “his place across the street” while Shaffer decided “what to do.” And while there, Shaffer noted that the storekeeper

insisted on providing supper, consisting of ham, spoon gravy, and other leftovers, which tasted mighty good to a famished hiker.

Shaffer made his decision. He noted, in WWS, that “He then drove me around to Galax.”

If the LBN account of Shaffer’s May 4<sup>th</sup> travels, rather than the SR48 narrative, had been presented to the ATC in November 1948, it would have likely raised eyebrows, if not serious questions, because the AT route through southern Virginia was well enough known at that time in

the AT community to have made it immediately understood that accepting a motor vehicle ride from Fries to Galax in 1948 would have caused Shaffer to skip the section of AT from Dixons Ferry to Galax. However, by the time of publication of WWS in the 1980's, that reference to being “drove around” to Galax would attract little attention because a 1980's (or later) reader would not be aware enough of the by-then long-abandoned AT route through that area to understand the impact of such a ride. With all Shaffer’s confusion of that day, it could be read as his accepting a ride back to, rather than ahead on, the AT. Given the well-established presumption that an AT thru-hiker would never accept a motor vehicle ride that would cause them to skip ahead on the AT, a reader would pass by that passage assuming it referred to some ride back to the AT, similar to the situation at Hampton, Tn. on April 29<sup>th</sup>.

But when LBN, SR48 and WWS are read with knowledge of that 1948 AT route, it is clear that the motor vehicle ride from Fries to Galax on May 4<sup>th</sup> caused Shaffer to skip a section of the AT. The section skipped was the 5.5 miles of AT from the railroad at Dixons Ferry to Galax.

No better summary of Shaffer’s actions and decisions, and what he saw as the import of his decision to accept an automobile ride around a section of the AT, can be stated than what Shaffer wrote in that apparent early draft of WWS.<sup>37</sup> At pages 65-66, Shaffer described the “marking fading near Fries,” his failure to find a bridge across the river, then wrote as follows:

My confusion is partly explained by a heavy downpour that discouraged looking at maps. Then a lady directed me to a hill back of her house where I blundered around for an hour before turning back. A man at a garage said she probably thought I meant the Appalachian Power Line, which passes there. He professed total ignorance concerning the Trail. The proprietor of a nearby grocery store said likewise. He recalled a ferry crossing but thought it had been abandoned. Meanwhile, the weather was getting worse and darkness was falling. When he suggested that I ride along with him when he drove to Galax, there seemed to be no alternative. I knew the Trail passed there. And so I committed the heinous crime, skipping several miles of Trail. However, my conscience was eased by the fact that I had spent more time and effort around Fries than would have been required to walk the distance.<sup>38</sup> Actually, as learned later, the ferry was still in operation during the day.

That candid description of the motor vehicle ride, and what impact Shaffer saw it having on his hike, was not included in SR48 to the ATC, and was apparently lost from the text of WWS in the process of rewrites and editing. For whatever reason, no such language appears in any of Shaffer’s known published or circulated writings.

On the evening of May 4, 1948, Shaffer therefore abandoned foot travel and, a few minutes later, probably looked out at the dark shadows of the waters of the New River as he finally crossed it on the U.S. 58 bridge, riding in a motor vehicle on his way to rejoin the AT in Galax. Shaffer did not therefore cross the New River on the AT, or even while traveling on foot, in 1948. As it turned out, he was apparently not to cross the New River on the AT, or traveling by foot, until October 1, 1965, when he crossed the New River on the U.S. 460 bridge while hiking the AT that year.<sup>39</sup>

It was 5.4 miles from the AT in downtown Galax (at the Hotel Bluemont on North Main Street at Center Street<sup>40</sup>) to Dixons Ferry. In the Guide, that 5.4 miles of AT was described in Chapter VII (b) Section 12, entitled “Galax To New River (Dixons Ferry).” It was 0.1 miles from Dixons Ferry to the railroad. So it was that 5.5 miles that Shaffer went around by motor vehicle on the evening of May 4, 1948.

Why did Shaffer accept that motor vehicle ride on May 4<sup>th</sup>? After all, Shaffer didn't accept such rides. In fact, making it clear to the reader that he did not accept such motor vehicle rides was an apparent matter of importance, or even pride, to Shaffer. In SR48 narrative for April 29<sup>th</sup>, he recounted how Rev. Lloyd Greer was "amazed" when Shaffer "... refused a ride" while road walking on Blue Spring Road toward Winner and Holston Mt. In WWS (at 60), he noted that he "declined" when Blue Ridge Parkway Ranger Bill Lord offered him a ride on May 8<sup>th</sup>, that (at 67) he refused two rides on May 18<sup>th</sup> on his way to Rockfish Gap, and (at 71) that he declined an offered ride while walking along the Skyline Drive in the Shenandoah National Park on May 21<sup>st</sup>.

Such repeated entries in WWS seemed intended by Shaffer to communicate his determination to walk a continuous course throughout his hike. Those repeated anecdotes of his refusing automobile rides that carried him "ahead" on the AT was obviously his way to inform the reader that he did not accept such motor vehicle rides.

In what was apparently his first media interview of his 1948 hike, Shaffer addressed the issue of accepting such motor vehicle rides when he told the editor of the Waynesboro *News-Virginian* interviewer in a May 19, 1948, interview<sup>41</sup> that while he did "... accept rides when he gets off the trail picking up food, mail, etc.," he "... couldn't take a lift while on the trail."

So after making it such a point in WWS of his refusal to take a ride on April 29<sup>th</sup> and those refusals to accept rides on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and May 21<sup>st</sup> did Shaffer accept a motor vehicle ride on May 4<sup>th</sup> that caused him to skip a 5.5 mile section of the AT?

Shaffer's explanation that "there seemed to be no alternative" is confusing. By May 4<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer had a full month's experience as a long-distance AT hiker. He had started his hike with confidence in himself. With those hundreds of miles and a full month's experience on the AT, and that "obstinacy" that was to "carry [Shaffer] through the rough spots," (January 1949 ATN article) how is it that Shaffer had no alternative in Fries to throwing his pack in a car and heading for a tourist home in Galax?

What situation was Shaffer in that left him no alternative? He was already at an apparently friendly residence in Fries. Given how helpful the folks in Fries had already been, finding a porch or shed for the night shouldn't have been a problem, and one might even end up in someone's spare bedroom with access to a bathtub and a southwestern Virginia breakfast the next morning. He had already enjoyed a 1948s version of a "trail angel" meal of "ham, spoon gravy, and other leftovers" (WWS at 55). So, with a good hot meal under one's belt and a roof over one's head in a friendly town, an experienced thru-hiker would probably wonder what exactly was Shaffer's problem with staying in Fries that night?

With a few inquiries the next morning, Shaffer could have learned about Dixons Ferry and backtracked only two miles to return to the AT. But even without backtracking, he could easily get across the New River the next morning at Fries.<sup>42</sup> Even if there wasn't a bridge or ferry, there were certainly an abundance of classic wooden New River john boats (with upturned ends for the riffles) moored along the banks and probably no shortage of local boaters willing to demonstrate, for about a nickel if any charge at all, the art of poling such a craft across the river with Shaffer and his pack as freight. But, in fact, there was a ferry, which Shaffer had walked right by the day before. A short walk back down to Blair Ferry and he'd be across the river. With just a couple of hours of walking, he'd be in Galax, having found himself miraculously back on the AT on the way,<sup>43</sup> with his AT hike back on track.

What did Shaffer mean, then, when he said he "saw no alternative" but to accept a ride in a motor vehicle around a section of the AT?

Staying in Fries, and trying again the next day to find a way across the river, meant more delay. Folks in Fries didn't even seem to know whether there was a ferry operating or not, and he hadn't seen any bridges. Backtracking down the New River the next day could turn into another Doublehead Gap or Hampton time (and mileage) consuming experience as he wandered the banks of that river looking for an apparently non-existent AT or way across the river. He might just end up back in Fries again, having wasted a half-day or more, as he did in Hampton.

What he may have meant, then, by there being "no alternative" is that the only sure way he knew to get across the river and reach Galax that night was by the U.S. 58 bridge, several miles upstream of Fries. He could see on his map the roundabout road connection to Galax by that bridge was too far (about 12 miles) to walk. So travel by vehicle was the only alternative available to reach Galax that evening.

After arriving in Galax by automobile from Fries, Shaffer spent the night of May 4, 1948, in a "tourist home" in Galax (LBN at 48, SR48, WWS at 55). The best description of his finding that room for the night, after the events of that day, is found (again) in that early draft of WWS.<sup>44</sup> At page 66, Shaffer wrote as follows:

That night I slept in a tourist home, the only time on the trek. I must have looked very bedraggled when facing the lady who answered the door. Maybe I looked pathetic. At any rate she let me have a room, for which I shall be forever grateful, even though it cost me two dollars and a half.

On that day (May 4, 1948) Shaffer had hiked only 2.85<sup>45</sup> of the 11.55 miles of AT between Byllesby and Galax, which was the distance that the AT happened to be along the same railroad that Shaffer followed from Byllesby to Fries, without apparent regard for the AT's location. He had thereby failed to hike 8.7 miles of the 11.55 miles of AT between Galax and Byllesby, with 5.5 of those AT miles skipped because he had accepted an automobile ride that took him around it.

These were not the first AT miles Shaffer had skipped. But by accepting the motor vehicle ride from Fries to Galax, Shaffer had now added a new category of skipped AT mileage to his 1948 hike: a 5.5 mile section of the AT skipped by use of a motor vehicle.

### **C. Galax, Virginia: May 4 - 5, 1948**

While staying in that tourist home the night of May 4<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer reported that he did a mileage calculation and was comfortable with the results. In WWS (at 55), he noted he had covered about 500 miles of the AT in 1 month, "the right progress for a trip all the way." Shaffer reported that his mileage calculation, "along with a good night's sleep and clearing skies in the morning, restored my cheerful outlook" (WWS at 55). With the total 1948 AT distance 2,050 miles<sup>46</sup>, Galax, at an official distance of 486.01 miles from Mt. Oglethorpe, was close, but still short of, the actual one-quarter point (512.5 miles) for a northbound AT hiker.

Having arrived by motor vehicle after dark on the 4<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer left that town on the 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 [a.m.] after mailing a letter to "Anna" (apparently his sister), and three [post]cards he had written at the tourist home. Shaffer does not mention in any of his narratives resupplying in Galax. With that early start,<sup>47</sup> it is unlikely that grocery stores, or the post office, would have been open. Given the lack of specifics in Shaffer's narrative, it is not known what tourist home in which he lodged, or its location. It is also not known where his motor vehicle ride from Fries to Galax the day before had left him in Galax. Given the late hour of his arrival and the early hour of his departure, if Shaffer visited downtown Galax at all, it would have likely been before 6:30 a.m. and only to drop his mail in a mail drop at the post office.

Whatever his activities on May 4 - 5, 1948, Shaffer's passing through Galax went apparently unnoticed in that community. That was remarkable in that receiving publicity as an AT hiker of that era in Galax was apparently not something requiring any interest or effort on the part of the hiker. Simply hiking into town on the old AT with a large pack on one's back was apparently, in and of itself, considered a news event by that community.

That high degree of community interest in AT hikers was seen when Gene Espy hiked through Galax on Monday, July 2, 1951. While Espy only mentioned Galax in passing in his book about his 1951 AT hike,<sup>48</sup> the next issue of the Galax Gazette (the July 5, 1951 issue) after Espy's visit featured a front page story about Espy entitled "'The Walking Man' Visits Galax On a 2,050 Stroll Monday." That story reported that Galax had "a somewhat unusual tourist for a visitor Monday morning when a heavily bearded young man strolled down Main Street with a tremendous pack on his back" and that the young man – "Eugene M. Espy, from Cordale, Georgia" – "was attracting no small amount of attention." The story indicated that the Gazette "sent a reporter hot-footing on the gentleman's trail" who caught up with Espy at the post office to interview him.<sup>49</sup>

While Espy's arrival in Galax on July 2, 1951, on his 1951 AT thru-hike was in and of itself a news event, Shaffer's late arrival and early departure on May 4 -5, 1948, attracted no notice in the Gazette. If he had walked into Galax on the AT in daylight instead of arriving by motor vehicle after dark, or if he had stayed in Galax long enough on the 5<sup>th</sup> for the stores and post office to open, his presence in the community as an AT thru-hiker would have certainly been noticed and presumably commented on in the Gazette. He could also have resupplied, since Galax was a substantial town with full services.

But Shaffer left Galax very early on the 5<sup>th</sup>, without apparently resupplying. As will be discussed later in this chapter, he would note in LBN (at 51) that his supplies were "very low" by the morning of the 7<sup>th</sup>, also suggesting he did not resupply in Galax. That early departure is therefore odd, under the circumstances. The logical explanation for the early departure is that Shaffer was in a hurry.

His being in a hurry would also explain why he didn't backtrack on the 5<sup>th</sup> to Dixons Ferry to restart his continuous hike at that point and thereby undo the damage done to his AT "thru-hike" by his acceptance of that motor vehicle ride the evening before. Whatever Shaffer thought or experienced on that rainy evening in Fries, Virginia, on May 4<sup>th</sup> that caused him to put his pack in a vehicle and accept a ride to Galax, he certainly knew in the light of day on May 5<sup>th</sup> that he had raised his level of skipping AT miles to a much higher, and much more universally unacceptable, level. In that earlier cited draft of WWS (at 65-66),<sup>50</sup> he described it as "the heinous crime" of "skipping several miles of Trail" by riding in a motor vehicle.

Why then, did Shaffer not just hitch the 5.4 miles from Galax back to Dixons Ferry, get ferried across, have the boat wait for him to walk back up to the railroad to the point he had passed the day before returning him to the southern bank, and then take up his AT hike again, having undone that skip? He could have been back in Galax by mid-morning, with time for lunch, resupplying, and probably a front-page interview in the Gazette – and with a great subject for a poem or at least an anecdote for his book in his experiences of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. More importantly, he would not depart Galax leaving behind him in the record of his 1948 AT hike those 5.5 miles of the AT "skipped by a ride in a motor vehicle."

It may be that Shaffer was simply in too big a hurry to lose that half-day, just as he was apparently in too big a hurry at Fries to stay there the night of May 4<sup>th</sup>. In LBN (at 48-49), Shaffer wrote (as of May 4<sup>th</sup>) that "Today is one month on the trail, have covered about one fourth. Hope to increase mileage."

Shaffer therefore arrived in Galax late on the 4<sup>th</sup>, by motor vehicle, and left early on the 5<sup>th</sup>. With an opportunity on the 5<sup>th</sup> to backtrack and erase the AT mileage he had skipped on the 4<sup>th</sup> by a motor vehicle ride, he failed to do so. As he departed from Galax, he therefore left having apparently been a virtually “invisible” thru-hiker in that community and leaving behind him in the record of his 1948 AT hike that 5.5 miles of AT skipped on May 4<sup>th</sup> by his motor vehicle ride from Fries to Galax. He was apparently in a hurry – a hurry to increase his mileage.

Shaffer would, as will be discussed in the next sub-chapter, substantially “increase mileage” that day. In fact, he would accumulate 20.68 AT miles by noon that day, but would do so by following the AT for only 2.39 miles before taking a bold short-cut by state highway to Pipers Gap by which he traveled only about 8 miles and cut-off 18.29 miles of AT mileage. His increase in mileage would therefore come at the expense of virtually ignoring the route of the AT on the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup>, just as he had virtually ignored the AT route after he left Byllesby at about noon on the previous day.

#### **D. Galax - Pipers Gap: May 5, 1948**

In 1948, the AT (north) followed Main Street through downtown Galax, Va., then continued north out of Galax on Va. 89. At 1.25 miles (AT mileage from downtown Galax), the AT turned left on hard-surfaced Va. 97 (Pipers Gap Rd.), followed Chestnut Creek upstream, then turned right off Va. 97 onto a gravel road (Coal Creek Rd.) at 2.39 miles. At that intersection, Coal Creek Rd. and the AT continued generally south while Va. 97 swung east and then southeast to intersect, in app. 8 miles, the Blue Ridge Parkway (“BRP”) at Pipers Gap (VSR 620 at the BRP).

The AT continued on Coal Creek Rd. (VSR 608), then Peaks Mt. Rd. (VSR 609) to cross the BRP at 9.9 miles. The AT then continued south on a fire road that briefly entered North Carolina before passing near the summit of Fisher Peak (3537')<sup>51</sup> at 12.75m. The 1950 Guide (at 14-353, 14-354) described Fisher Peak as “the outstanding landmark of this section of the Trail, noting a “very rewarding view” from the summit and the “[h]uge rock slabs” that afforded an “extraordinary view south” near the AT.

From that point, the AT followed a woods trail for 2.34 miles that had been “intensively cleared in 1947”<sup>52</sup> (1950 Guide at 14-353), intersected and followed unpaved VSR 715, and then crossed the BRP at 17.24 miles from Galax to intersect VSR 608. From that point, the AT followed unpaved VSR 608 parallel to the BRP for 3.44 miles, crossing it twice, to Pipers Gap (20.68 AT miles from Galax), where it crossed VSR 620.

In WWS (at 55) Shaffer describes his hike on May 5<sup>th</sup> by first noting that his map indicated “. . . the Trail route going southeast to the Blue Ridge Parkway . . . “ He therefore “. . . followed roads in that direction and intercepted” the BRP “. . . near the North Carolina line” In SR48, Shaffer notes he “[t]urned on route 97, missed turnoff and continued on to Parkway.” In LBN (at 49), Shaffer notes that he left Galax on Va. 89, following the AT, then turned of on VA. 97 still following “[t]rail signs for several miles.” Shaffer noted in LBN that from that he “assumed trail followed [Va. 97] to parkway.”

The SR48 and LBN narratives therefore describe Shaffer following Va. 97 for the 1.17 miles from Va. 86 to the intersection of Coal Creek Rd. (VSR 608), following AT blazes.<sup>53</sup> Since the AT was marked, that intersection was undoubtedly marked, as was Coal Creek Road, with AT blazes and/or metal markers. Va. 97 beyond that intersection was not marked with AT blazes/markers.

In WWS, Shaffer notes that his map indicated “. . . the Trail route going southeast to the Blue Ridge Parkway.” Review of the road maps of the era do not, however, support that observation. Both General Drafting (Esso) and Rand McNally (Gulf, Texaco, Sinclair) maps from the late 1940's

of that area all show the AT moving not southeast, but very nearly south, from Galax, with the obvious arc through a corner of North Carolina (Fisher Peak) that turned the AT northeast. While Coal Creek Road was apparently not shown on a road map, it was in the proper location and headed in the correct direction to be the AT as shown on the road map. Va. 97 was on the road map, and was definitely not marked as the AT.

When read closely, Shaffer doesn't actually say in WWS that he followed the AT. He stated, instead, that he "... followed roads in that direction and intercepted" the BRP (and not the AT) "... near the North Carolina line." And from the point at which he intercepted the BRP, he describes the AT as "... cutting back and forth across" the BRP "with marking no more than a trace."

Other than the statement that Shaffer's route intercepted the BRP "... near the North Carolina line," his WWS route would appear to be the same as his LBN/SR48 route, which is one following not the AT south to Fisher Peak, but instead Va. 97 southeast to Pipers Gap.

Shaffer therefore reached the BRP and the AT Pipers Gap at about noon on May 5, 1948.

But he had not followed the AT to reach that point. Instead, he had headed southeast from Galax on Va. 97. In order to follow Va. 97 to Pipers Gap, Shaffer would have had to walk app. 8 miles on Va. 97, a state highway, with no AT markers and with the road clearly indicated on his road map as not being the AT.

That "short cut" cannot be seen as a reasonable navigational error. Instead, the record reflects that Shaffer continued on Va. 97 past the intersection of Coal Creek Road, and the AT, without apparent regard for the route of the AT. As in the case of Shaffer following Tn. 67 north from Hampton, Tn., on April 28<sup>th</sup>, there is no ambiguity as to Shaffer's knowledge of whether or not he was following the AT when he chose to follow Va. 97. It cannot therefore be seen as a reasonable navigational error.

While a road map might not be detailed enough to necessarily follow the AT, it had more than adequate detail to indicate when a state highway featured on the map was not the AT. In this case, Va. 97 was a state highway on the road map, and it was not the AT. From his road map alone, he knew that he was not following the AT. On road maps of the era, the AT was shown as moving south from Galax, making a circuitous loop south of the BRP, touching North Carolina, then swinging northeast to meet Va. 97 (VSR 620) at Pipers Gap. From Shaffer's report in LBN, as well as the report of the reblazing project in 1947 (*see* Page 5-3), the AT was marked through that section. Shaffer therefore had no basis upon which to believe (or assume) that the AT followed Va. 97.

Since that section of the AT had apparently been the subject of the previously discussed March 15, 1947, "reblazing" project sponsored by the ATC, it was apparently adequately marked, with the public road sections probably designated with blazes and/or metal markers at road intersections. In addition, Shaffer's description of the AT in LBN states that he followed trail "marks" for "several miles" on Va. 89 and Va. 97.

Shaffer's following entry in LBN noted that he "assumed trail followed to parkway" and his noting in SR48 that he "missed turnoff" indicates that he was aware that the AT had turned off Va. 97 at VSR 608, but that he nevertheless continued to walk Va. 97 either because of a refusal to backtrack once the AT marks disappeared or, more likely, his intention all along to use Va. 97 as a "short-cut" to the BRP in order to save time.

It therefore appears that on the morning of May 5, 1948, Shaffer decided at some point to follow Va. 97 in a southeasterly direction to the BRP without regard for the AT route as shown on his road map, or as marked on the ground. He observed that Va. 97, although not the AT, was a

direct southeasterly route to the BRP (at Piper Gap) that cut off the circuitous AT route from Galax that extended south to a corner of North Carolina then northeast to that same point (Piper Gap) on the BRP. So he did follow “. . . roads in that direction and intercepted” the BRP, but not “. . . near the North Carolina line.” He did so because he did not want to take the time it would require (probably a full extra day) to hike the circuitous AT to Pipers Gap. Having traveled east, and now south, from Damascus (Piper Gap being further south than Damascus, and Fisher Peak being even further south, on the NC border), Shaffer wanted to reach the BRP by the most efficient route, which was Va. 97 to the southeast, then turn north. He could see on his road map that once in the BRP corridor, it offered a direct route northeast. Shaffer’s interest in reaching Pipers Gap is reflected in his entry in LBN (at 49) that after reaching Pipers Gap, he was so “happy to be headed north again” that he was actually singing as he hiked.

By that Va. 97 “short-cut,” Shaffer walked only 2.39 miles of the total 20.68 AT miles from Galax to Pipers Gap. He thereby failed to hike 18.29 miles of the AT, including the Fisher Peak section. This is the most dramatic short-cut made on foot by Shaffer of AT mileage in the south. By walking app. 8 miles up Va. 97, he accumulated 20.68 miles of AT mileage by noon on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

#### **E. Summary, New River Valley: May 4 - 5, 1948**

Between Byllesby, on May 4<sup>th</sup>, and Pipers Gap, on May 5<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer had, according to the calculations of this Report,

1. hiked on May 4, 1948, 2.85<sup>54</sup> of the 11.55 miles of AT between Byllesby and Galax, thereby failing to hike 8.7 miles of the AT between those two points, with 5.5 of those AT miles skipped by Shaffer by motor vehicle travel from Fries to Galax on the evening of May 4, 1948; and,
2. hiked on May 5, 1948, 2.39 miles of the total 20.68 AT miles from Galax to Pipers Gap, thereby failing to hike 18.29 miles of the AT between those points.

On May 4-5, 1948, Shaffer thereby hiked only 5.24 miles (16.2%) of the 32.23 AT miles between Byllesby and Pipers Gap, with 5.5 of those AT miles skipped by Shaffer by motor vehicle travel from Fries to Galax on the evening of May 4, 1948.

That short-cut, along with Shaffer’s navigation decisions on May 4<sup>th</sup>, had caused him to virtually lose contact with the AT for a 24-hour period. From about noon on May 4<sup>th</sup>, when Shaffer was at Byllesby, until about noon on May 5<sup>th</sup>, when he intercepted the BRP at Pipers Gap, Shaffer had followed the AT for only 5.24 miles of the 32.23 miles of AT from Byllesby to Pipers Gap. He had actually walked about 20 miles in that period, and had ridden in a motor vehicle 12-13 miles in his “driving around” a 5.5 mile section of AT from Galax to Dixons Ferry.

So in that single 24-hour period, Shaffer had accumulated 32.23 miles of AT while actually following the AT only 5.24 miles. He had accepted a motor vehicle ride that had caused him to skip 5.5 miles of the AT. And he had failed to hike 18.28 miles of AT by one short-cut along Va. 97. But, with the aid of the motor vehicle ride on May 4<sup>th</sup> and that shortcut on May 5<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer had done much to fulfill his self-stated goal at Galax of increasing his mileage (LBN at 25).

# CHAPTER 12 THE BLUE RIDGE OF SOUTHERN VIRGINIA

## A. Introduction

After moving south across the New River Valley, the 1948 AT intersected the BRP south of Galax, then reached the crest of the Blue Ridge at Fisher Peak. The AT then turned generally northeast, moving along the Virginia Blue Ridge along with the BRP in the same broad corridor. The AT intersected Va. 97 at Pipers Gap.

Shaffer intercepted the AT, and the BRP, at Pipers Gap at about noon on May 5<sup>th</sup> as he followed Va. 97, rather than the AT, from Galax.

Both the AT and the BRP traveled northeast from Pipers Gap along the Blue Ridge to the Adney Gap area, a distance of 85.82 miles on the AT and 70.2 miles on the BRP. In the Adney Gap area, the AT turned west toward Glenvar, on U.S. 11 south of Salem, while the BRP reached a temporary terminus pending construction of the BRP through the Roanoke Valley.

This chapter will follow Shaffer's hike along the Blue Ridge on May 5 - 9, 1948, from Pipers Gap to the point near Adney Gap where the AT turned west, away from the Blue Ridge and the BRP.

## B. Pipers Gap - Groundhog Mt.: May 5-6, 1948

From Pipers Gap, the BRP and the AT moved northeast along the crest of the Blue Ridge toward Fancy Gap and Groundhog Mt. The distance between Pipers Gap and Groundhog Mt. was 19.56 miles on the AT,<sup>1</sup> and 17.4 miles by BRP.<sup>2</sup>

In SR48, Shaffer unambiguously reports that he followed the AT north from Pipers Gap toward Groundhog Mt. In SR48, Shaffer reported that once he reached the BRP following Va. 97 on May 5<sup>th</sup>, he “[f]ollowed trail along roads paralleling Parkway past Fancy Gap and camped near the trail in a clump of pines.”

But, in one of the more striking inconsistencies between Shaffer's 1948 narratives, Shaffer's LBN narrative unambiguously reports that he followed the BRP, not that AT, at Pipers Gap. In LBN (at 49) he reported that after passing Pipers Gap, he was walking the BRP, found it “very nice, newly coated with black top,” that it “follows divide,” and that he was “happy to be headed north again” and, with the fair weather he was experiencing, he was actually singing as he hiked.

Shaffer photographs of record support the LBN version of his May 5<sup>th</sup> course of travel.

Shaffer reported in LBN taking “four pics along parkway” on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

The first Shaffer photograph that can be identified from May 5<sup>th</sup> is a view of the BRP,<sup>3</sup> apparently as Shaffer first saw it at the intersection of VSR 608 with the BRP (No. 212A/Mount No. 11; NMAH 1948 Slides, No. 069). The section of VSR 608 from VSR 620 to the BRP just north of Pipers Gap that was followed by AT in 1948 has been abandoned and the actual intersection obliterated by regrading. The old overgrown road can still be found in the woods beside the BRP at approximate BRP Mile 205.7.<sup>4</sup>

In LBN, Shaffer described taking a photograph with Pilot Mt. “in hazy distance.” That particular photograph is apparently WWS Index No. 084/Mount No. 12, the view from the Sugarloaf

Overlook (Granite Quarry Overlook<sup>5</sup>) on the BRP at Mile 202.7.

WWS Index No. 223/Mount No. 14 (labeled “Near Roanoke” by Shaffer), is a photograph of a BRP sign. Shaffer placed this slide in his slide show as “near Roanoke,” but the BRP mileages displayed on the sign places the sign at Fancy Gap. The photograph was taken from the south side of the BRP on the access road between it and U.S. 52.

WWS Index No. 212/Mount No. 13, a slide of a view of the BRP, would therefore seem to fall between the Sugarloaf Overlook (Granite Quarry Overlook) and Fancy Gap. However, the location of that particular view on the BRP has not yet been identified.

In contrast, Shaffer did not report taking, and apparently did not take, any photographs of views or features on the AT that day.<sup>6</sup>

Having reported that he followed the BRP in LBN, and that he had followed the AT in SR48, Shaffer doesn't exactly say what route he followed on May 5<sup>th</sup> in WWS. But his description of the AT seems to suggest he either followed the AT through that area, or attempted to but couldn't, because of poor marking. In his WWS report (at 55), he described the AT from Pipers Gap north as “. . . cutting back and forth across” the BRP “with marking no more than a trace.”

Neither LBN nor SR48 reported any such problems with AT marking. To the contrary, Shaffer reported in LBN (at 49) that he followed AT markings from Galax on Va. 89 and then Va. 97 until the markings ceased at the point Shaffer left the AT when he failed to make the turn from Va. 97 onto Coal Creek Rd. (VSR 608).

As previously discussed, there was a reported “reblazing” project of the AT through southern Virginia on March 15, 1947, which was sponsored by the ATC (*see*, Page 5-3 and Chapter 5, Note 5).<sup>7</sup> The 1950 Guide, which was based on 1949 data, discusses the “temporary nature” of the AT in that region, but then states (at 14-312)

Pending the announcement of the major relocation, the existing route will continue to be adequately marked and this region should not be omitted from the traveler's itinerary.

With those quite different reports on the marking of the AT in southern Virginia, how does one, after more than six decades, determine the actual quality of the marking of the AT in 1948 through that area? In the case of the AT at Pipers Gap on May 5, 1948, the answer is with an eye witness who was standing there, with Shaffer. That eye witness was his own camera.

For when Shaffer reached his immediate goal in his walk along Va. 97 from Galax on May 5<sup>th</sup> - - the Blue Ridge Parkway at Pipers Gap - - he took the previously discussed photograph of the BRP as he probably first viewed that road (WWS Index Slide 212A /Mount No. 11; NMAH 1948 Slides, No. 069).

By apparent coincidence, that photograph of the BRP is also an eye witness to the quality of AT marking in southern Virginia in 1948. What can be clearly seen in that photograph is an AT blaze on a tree to the left of the gravel road. It is one of those classic, exactly rectangular, brilliant white blazes that were once the pride of any self-respecting AT maintainer. With its apparent brightness, it was very likely renewed during the 1947 ATC reblazing project (*see* Page 5-3).

Describing that “perfect-looking” AT blaze as “marking no more than a trace” is not credible. And AT blazes don't often appear alone. Taken with Shaffer's reporting that he saw AT marking as he left Galax and the report in the 1950 Guide (at 14-353) of the “intensive” clearing of the trail

section in the Fisher Peak area in 1947, it is most likely that the very distinct AT blaze seen in that Shaffer photograph is an example of the work done in that previously discussed ATC reblazing project in 1947 along the southern Virginia section of the AT along the BRP (*see* Page 5-3).

With the eyewitness of Shaffer's own photograph indicating a well-blazed AT at Pipers Gap, along with other matters of record as to that issue, Shaffer's WWS description that AT marking was "no more than a trace" can not therefore be seen as accurate. Shaffer's not following the AT in that area becomes, therefore, the product of his decisions and preferences as to an AT that was as clearly marked as the blaze in WWS Index No. 212A.

Shaffer's observation in WWS that the AT "cut back and forth across the newly built Parkway," and his report in SR48 that the AT followed "roads paralleling Parkway" also suggest that Shaffer was walking the BRP, not the AT. That observation suggests that the AT north of Pipers Gap was following roads closely associated with the BRP.

The entire 19.52 AT miles between Pipers Gap and Groundhog Mt. was located on secondary roads, with one short section of U.S. 52 through the community of Fancy Gap.

The first 7.55 miles of that distance, which included the community of Fancy Gap, was, in fact, in general close association with the AT. That situation was much the result of the crest of the Blue Ridge being a narrow ridge through that area, limiting the room available for the local road network. In that distance, the AT actually followed the BRP for a total of one mile in two sections where the BRP had supplanted the old "Ridge Road" (VSR 608) and no replacement route was constructed for VSR 608, crossed the BRP once, and went under a BRP overpass (at U.S. 52). For 2.6 miles, VSR 608 (and the AT) did closely parallel the BRP with the roads intervisible. So through that distance an AT hiker would get a general impression of the AT following "roads paralleling Parkway" and cutting "back and forth across . . ." "the Parkway."

Beyond that 7.55 mile section, however, the AT and BRP took different routes as the Blue Ridge crest was broader, allowing for a wider road network. Soon after going under the BRP at Ward Gap, north of Fancy Gap, at a BRP overpass with no access between the BRP and VSR 608, the AT left VSR 608 and followed secondary roads well to the west of the BRP<sup>8</sup> to rejoin VSR 608 at Groundhog Mt. Given the character of that route, the impression a hiker traveling that 12.01 mile section of the AT would get would not be consistent with the AT following "roads paralleling Parkway" and cutting "back and forth across . . ." "the Parkway."

Shaffer's impressions as to location of the AT noted in LBN (at 50) as he walked the BRP is, however, entirely consistent with the relationship between the AT and BRP. As previously indicated, Shaffer reported in LBN (at 49) that he followed the BRP from Pipers Gap. His description, as noted in LBN, of his impressions of the location of the AT as he walked the BRP was as follows:

Trail crosses back & forth over parkway following dirt roads.  
Toward evening was away to West.

In LBN (at 49-50), therefore Shaffer described hiking the newly-paved BRP north from Pipers Gap. He noted that he took four photographs along the BRP, including one at the BRP Sugarloaf Overlook (south of Rockfish Gap) and one of a BRP sign at Rockfish Gap taken from the north side of that highway on an access road from U.S. 52. He related his impression as he walked the BRP that the AT was, at first, crossing back and forth over the BRP and then, later toward evening, that the AT was "away to West." Such an impression was generally correct.

Also indicative of Shaffer following the BRP, rather than the AT, is his failure to mention in

LBN the store and post office in the community of Fancy Gap. While the AT went through that community on U.S. 52, the BRP crossed U.S. 52 on an overpass, without contact with those community facilities. In SR48, Shaffer mentioned traveling “past Fancy Gap,” but his failure to mention those community facilities suggests that was a reference to seeing the community from the elevated BRP as it passed on that highway, rather than his passing through that community.<sup>9</sup>

Further support for the proposition that he walked the BRP, rather than the AT, is found in his description of his camp on May 5<sup>th</sup>, and his route early in the morning of May 6<sup>th</sup>. Shaffer reported in LBN (at 26) camping “in woodland under pines,” without reference to the AT. In SR48, he reported he camped “near the trail in a clump of pines,” continuing thereby his claim in SR48 to have followed the AT.

In WWS, he reported that he reached the Puckett Cabin, a BRP historical exhibit<sup>10</sup>, the next morning (May 6). He must have camped fairly close to the cabin since he apparently reached it very early the next day. A photograph of the Puckett Cabin at WWS Index 203 (Slide No. 15) shows what appears to be very early morning sun on the structure.

The Puckett Cabin photograph (Film No. 15), together with the BRP photograph (Film No. 11), the Sugarloaf Overlook photograph (Film No. 12), the view of the BRP from an as yet unidentified location (Film No. 13), and the photograph of the BRP sign at Fancy Gap (Film No. 14), all make up 5 successive photographs taken by Shaffer in the afternoon of May 5<sup>th</sup> and the early morning of May 6<sup>th</sup>. That line of photographs (Film Nos. 11-15), all of features on the BRP, trace Shaffer’s travels from Pipers Gap to the Puckett Cabin, 1.1 miles from Groundhog Mt. on the BRP. With no photographs of any features or views from the AT, Shaffer’s photographic record supports his narrative in LBN that he followed the BRP from Pipers Gap, not his claim in SR48 that he followed the AT.

As far as documentary matters -- writings, photographs -- there is nothing in the Shaffer record that indicates he ever left the BRP between Pipers Gap and Groundhog Mt. Shaffer does not describe in his writings any scene or feature on the secondary roads followed by the AT between those two points. There are no photographs in the Shaffer collection that can be identified as being of any scene or feature on that section of the AT.

The Puckett Cabin was a feature of the BRP, not the AT. Prior to reaching the Puckett Cabin, the BRP made its last contact with the AT at the point that VSR 608 (and the AT) left the BRP, 7.55 miles from Pipers Gap. Although Shaffer could have reached the BRP beyond that last point of contact from the roads followed by the AT, it would have required his diversion from the AT route. Shaffer’s presence at Puckett Cabin early in the morning of May 6<sup>th</sup> therefore meant that Shaffer very likely followed the BRP for at least the 12.01 miles from that last point of contact to Puckett Cabin and beyond to Groundhog Mt., where the AT (on VSR 608) again intersected the BRP.

It does not appear, therefore, that Shaffer was “near the trail” when he camped on the night of May 5<sup>th</sup>, if he meant that statement to suggest he was on the AT.

Since Shaffer’s camping spot was not on the AT on May 5<sup>th</sup>, it is difficult to calculate AT mileage. However, the closest AT point would probably be the intersection of VSR 641 and 643, 10.12 miles north (on the AT) from Fancy Gap. With Fancy Gap being 6.96 miles from Pipers Gap on the AT, and with Pipers Gap 21.13 miles from Galax on the AT, Shaffer’s AT mileage for May 5<sup>th</sup> would therefore total approximately 38.21 miles. His actual mileage for that day, following Va. 97 and the BRP, would be approximately 26 miles.

When at Puckett Cabin on the morning of May 6<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer would have not been on or near

the AT. He would have therefore followed the BRP on to Groundhog Mt., where the BRP again intersected the AT. It would have been at that point that Shaffer would have again come into contact with the AT as it crossed the BRP on VSR 608.

How much, then, of the 19.52 miles of the AT between Pipers Gap and Groundhog Mt. did Shaffer follow on May 5-6, 1948?

Shaffer followed the AT from the Va. 97 - VSR 608 intersection to the BRP and then along the 0.8 miles that the AT followed the BRP before turning off to follow VSR 608, a distance of 1.27 miles. Since Shaffer took a photograph of the BRP Sugarloaf Mt. Overlook, which is located on the BRP beyond that turn-off of the AT, he must have followed the BRP, not the AT (on VSR 608), beyond that point.

The next BRP crossing by VSR 608 and the AT was north of the Sugar Loaf Overlook at a point 3.95 miles north of Pipers Gap. Shaffer could have walked the AT, on VSR 608, from that intersection to the BRP at Fancy Gap, a distance of 3.1 miles. However, the AT approached the BRP crossing of U.S. 52 at Fancy Gap from the south. Shaffer's photograph of the BRP sign at Fancy Gap (WWS Index No. 223) was taken from the north side of that overpass. Shaffer would have not been at that location if following the AT, but would have found it convenient to get a photograph of the BRP bridge<sup>11</sup> from that point if he was following the BRP. The viewpoint of that photograph therefore further establishes that Shaffer followed the BRP, and not VSR 608 and the AT, through Fancy Gap.

The record therefore establishes that Shaffer followed the AT for 1.27 of the 6.51 AT miles from Fancy Gap to Pipers Gap.

From Fancy Gap to Groundhog Mt., the record appears to establish that Shaffer followed the BRP, and not the AT, except for the 0.2 miles of the BRP north of Fancy Gap that the AT followed. BRP mileage between those points was 10.7 miles, while AT mileage was 12.56 miles.

Of the 19.52 miles of AT between Pipers Gap and Groundhog Mt., Shaffer followed the AT for the first 1.27 miles of that section and the 0.2 miles north of Fancy Gap where the AT followed the BRP, for a total AT mileage hiked of 1.47 miles (or 7.5%). Based on the calculations in this Report, Shaffer therefore failed to hike 18.05 (92.4%) of the 19.52 miles of the AT between Pipers Gap and Groundhog Mt. on May 5 - 6, 1948. He instead followed the BRP for approximately 17 miles between those points, including the total 1.0 miles that the AT followed the BRP through that distance.

### **C. Groundhog Mt. - U.S. 58: May 6 - 7, 1948**

As Shaffer reached Groundhog Mt. on the morning of May 6<sup>th</sup>, he was apparently walking the BRP as it intersected VSR 608. The AT south was to the left while the AT north was to the right on VSR 608. The entrance to the BRP Groundhog Mt. Parking Overlook and the Groundhog Mt. Lookout Tower was to the right.

A road map would have indicated to Shaffer that the AT made a wide swing to the east, away from the BRP, from near this point. Depending on the source of the map, there was likely an indication that on the AT in that area was the "Pinnacles of Dan." Shaffer noted the AT "[veering eastward]" in WWS (at 55). Wishing to follow the AT in that direction, Shaffer likely turned right on VSR 608 from the BRP at Groundhog Mt.

From Groundhog Mt., Shaffer apparently followed the AT along a series of secondary roads for approximately 7 miles before turning right (east) to begin his traverse of the Pinnacles of Dan

section of the AT. Shaffer described it in WWS (at 55-56) as a “deep, wild gorge” with a “peak as pointed as a pyramid” rising from the bottom of the gorge with “its top reaching the level of the canyon walls.” Shaffer realized as he followed the AT that it actually descended to a sag, then went up and over that “incredible peak” with a “pinpoint summit” and “with a precipice on either side.” After reaching the bottom of the Dan River Gorge, the AT then climbed straight up out of the gorge. Shaffer commented that “[t]his couple of miles was probably the most rugged and most spectacular section of the Trail . . . “

After leaving the Dan River Gorge, Shaffer followed the AT through a remote area before joining VSR 610, which he followed to U.S. 58, 17.54 AT miles from Groundhog Mt., on the 7<sup>th</sup> after camping in “a rain-drenched woods” (WWS at 57) the night of the 6<sup>th</sup>. He spent a very difficult night on the 6<sup>th</sup> with heavy rain and wind (LBN at 50 - 51).

It is unclear from his narratives where Shaffer camped on the 6<sup>th</sup>, and his route early on the 7<sup>th</sup>. The only known locations mentioned are “Bursted Rock,” a point on the AT 4.93 miles south of U.S. 58 that was passed by Shaffer on May 6<sup>th</sup>, and Meadows of Dan, a location several miles off the AT where he ended up in the late afternoon of the 7<sup>th</sup>. With the former point on the AT and the latter not, he necessarily left the AT in the course of his travel on May 6 - 7. What confuses the narratives is that Shaffer fails to note where his route deviated from the AT.

LBN (at 50 - 51) provides the most detailed narrative. He reported leaving his camp of the 5<sup>th</sup>, which was apparently 1 - 2 miles south of Groundhog Mt. on the BRP, at 6:45 a.m., and passing “Bursted Rock”<sup>12</sup> later that day after traversing the Pinnacle of Dan section. Shaffer’s mileage for that day to that point would have been approximately 14.5 miles, with the 1.85 very difficult miles through the Pinnacles of Dan section likely taking a substantial amount of time. Shaffer describes in LBN going “on and on” to a “hard road” and “looking for store, supplies very low.”<sup>13</sup> He then mentions going up “another dirt road” to camp, then starting early the next morning (the 7<sup>th</sup>). He then “[d]ropped down to a spring” where he “cooked breakfast, shaved and washed underwear and socks,” then continued to hike until “about 11:30” when he stopped to talk to a farmer named “Mr. Handy.”

The “hard road” Shaffer mentioned would have been U.S. 58, since it was apparently the only paved road in that area in 1948. The AT, following VSR 610 (Bursted Rock Rd.),<sup>14</sup> intersected U.S. 58 4.93 miles from Burstest Rock. When he reached U.S. 58, Shaffer would have traveled approximately 19.43 that day.

The AT turned right (east) at that point and followed paved U.S. 58 for 0.15 miles before turning left on unpaved VSR 610. After running roughly parallel to U.S. 58 on VSR 610, at a distance, for 2.29 miles, the AT turned north on VSR 764, with a left at that intersection offering the last opportunity for any direct connection between the AT and U.S. 58, or Meadows of Dan.

Shaffer was looking low on supplies, and leaving the AT in search of a store.<sup>15</sup> On a 1947 Esso road map, the nearest communities shown are Vesta and Meadows of Dan, to the west (I. e. to the left) at that intersection, and in the opposite direction to that taken by the AT. With none of the secondary roads followed by the AT shown on that map, U.S. 58 would have been the only sure route to getting supplies at Meadows of Dan. It is therefore most likely that Shaffer turned toward Meadows of Dan on U.S. 58 at that intersection.

What is confusing, however, about the LBN narrative is Shaffer’s reference to going up “another dirt road” to camp after reaching the “hard road,” and the apparent several hours of hiking he reported on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> before reaching the Handy farm. The mileages involved don’t seem to warrant that amount of hiking time. Research for this report has not been in sufficient depth to establish the location of that Handy farm, but local sources indicate it was likely on Burstest Rock Rd.

(VSR 610). Knowing that location would be useful, since that would establish a known point on his route on May 7<sup>th</sup>. It may be as well that Shaffer followed the AT beyond U.S. 58 for 2.44 miles, but that is unlikely because Shaffer was not likely going to turn away from the supply point he had identified from his map at Meadows of Dan and would be very hesitant to go beyond that highway as it could well have (and would have, after 2.44 miles) cut him off from convenient access to that community. It may even be that Shaffer followed some route other than VSR 610 to U.S. 58, or followed an unpaved road (VSR 632) toward Meadows of Dan instead of U.S. 58.

It has therefore not been possible to reconstruct Shaffer's route late on the 6<sup>th</sup> and early on the 7<sup>th</sup> that conforms in all respects with his narrative in LBN. For purposes of this Report, the most likely scenario will be adopted, which is that he reached U.S. 58 while following the AT on VSR 610, then left the AT at that point when he turned left toward Meadows of Dan with the AT turning right.

On May 6-7, 1948, Shaffer thereby followed the AT for the 17.54 miles from Groundhog Mt. to U.S. 58. For the first time since leaving Byllesby on May 4<sup>th</sup>, he had followed an extended section of the AT without interruption. From the AT (then following VSR 610) intersection with U.S. 58, he turned left, with the AT turning right, thereby leaving the AT to travel to U.S. 58 to Meadows of Dan for supplies.

#### **D. U.S. 58 - Tuggle Gap (Va. 8): May 7 - 8, 1948**

Shaffer reached U.S. 58 on May 7<sup>th</sup> as VSR 610, which the AT was then following, intersected U.S. 58.

From that intersection, the AT turned right (east) for 0.15 miles on U.S. 58, then left on VSR 610. After leaving U.S. 58, the AT followed a series of unpaved secondary roads 7.9 miles (from the southerly VSR 610/AT intersection with U.S. 58) to a crossroads<sup>16</sup> at Rock Castle Gorge, where there was in 1948 a gas station, store and church.<sup>17</sup> The AT continued to follow secondary roads from there to ascend to the crest of the Blue Ridge, then cross and recross the BRP on VSR 720 before leaving the road (at 11.34 miles) to follow a trail through the BRP Rocky Knob Recreation Area. The BRP was 50 ft. left (west) of the AT at that point. After entering the Rocky Knob Area, the AT followed a trail generally along the crest, reaching Rocky Knob (3572') at 13.81 miles, where there was an open stone shelter.

Shaffer traveled to Meadows of Dan on May 7<sup>th</sup>, rather than following the AT (north) beyond U.S. 58. At about 11:30 [a.m.], he stopped to talk to a farmer named "Handy." Shaffer remained to share a meal with Mr. Handy, his son and daughter, and finally left the Handy's house at "about 3:30"<sup>18</sup> (LBN at 52-53) to travel the remaining 3 miles to Meadows of Dan in cold, windy conditions, with some rain<sup>19</sup> (WWS at 59).

At Meadows of Dan, Shaffer bought supplies in a store, and remained there (with a pot-bellied stove to warm him) "and talked for a while" (LBN at 53, WWS at 59).

The 17.54 miles of the AT between Groundhog Mt. and U.S. 58 was the longest continuous section of the AT hiked by Shaffer since he left Byllesby on May 4<sup>th</sup>. Having reestablished continuous contact with the AT, Shaffer could have returned to the AT and continued to follow it after his visit to Meadows of Dan. Or, Shaffer could return to walking the BRP, which crossed U.S. 58 at Meadows of Dan.

Shaffer did not return to the AT. Instead, he chose to return to walking the BRP. He described (in LBN at 53) his navigation decision at Meadows of Dan by noting that after he "[f]inally left" the store at Meadows of Dan, he "came to parkway and decided to walk on to Rocky Knob . . ." In SR48, Shaffer noted that after reaching Meadows of Dan, he ". . . cut over to Parkway and

followed along to Rocky Knob . . .” In WWS (at 59), Shaffer described how the storekeeper at Meadows of Dan told him about the shelter on Rocky Knob “a few miles up the Parkway,” and how he “determined to reach there if possible.” In WWS, Shaffer described arriving at the “Dale Mabry Mill” on the BRP, where he took a photograph.<sup>20</sup>

Shaffer therefore walked the BRP north from Meadows of Dan to the BRP Rocky Knob Recreation Area, visiting the Mabry Mill BRP exhibit along the way.

It isn’t entirely clear when Shaffer decided to skip the section of AT from U.S. 58 to the Rocky Knob Recreation Area. He may well have originally intended to return to the AT at U.S. 58 after going into Meadows of Dan for supplies. But Shaffer’s remarkably long stop at the Handy farm (11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., according to LBN at 52-53) and his extended stay at the Meadows of Dan store severely limited his available hiking time on the 7<sup>th</sup>. It may well be that Shaffer realized at Meadows of Dan that a return to the AT would put him back on the Trail very late in the day, with no certainty as to a camping spot on that cold, windy evening. When he heard about the shelter at Rocky Knob and realized the BRP was a convenient (and by-now familiar) route to reach it, he may have then made the decision to not return to the AT, but to return to walking the BRP.

It was 8.7 miles on the BRP from Meadows of Dan to the southern end of the BRP Rocky Knob Recreation Area. As the BRP entered the Rocky Knob Area, VSR 720 intersected it. Fifty feet to the right on VSR 720, the AT left that road to also enter the Rocky Knob Area ( at 11.34 miles from where Shaffer had left the AT on U.S. 58) on a track through an open field. As the BRP slabbbed the northern slope of the ridge, descending, the AT ascended the ridge to Grassy Knob where it intersected a National Park Service (“NPS”) trail (at 11.8 miles) and turned left, along the crest of the ridge, to descend to a low point in the ridge (at 12.41 miles) where the BRP was “100 yds. to the right and a concessionaire’s station nearby” (1950 Guide).

It was approximately 9.6 miles on the BRP from Meadows of Dan to that point. From that access point to the BRP, the AT followed the NPS trail 1.43 miles over a low summit on the ridge, past another access point to the BRP, then to the summit of Rocky Knob with the NPS shelter just beyond the summit, at 13.84 AT miles from U.S. 58.

In LBN (at 53), Shaffer reported arriving at the Rocky Knob shelter at 9:30 [p.m.], and walking by starlight. With sunset on May 7, 1948, at 7:15 p.m. and the end of civil twilight at 7:43 p.m., and the moon a waning crescent with only 2% of its visible disk illuminated,<sup>21</sup> it would have been fully dark by the time Shaffer entered the Rocky Knob area on the BRP. It is therefore unlikely that he would have observed the AT briefly parallel with the BRP at VSR 720.<sup>22</sup>

If he had followed the AT from VSR 720, it would have required that he climb through open fields to the summit of Grassy Knob, which at 3436<sup>23</sup> was itself a prominent peak on the ridge, then navigate a trail intersection and then descend about 200 vertical feet to a gap in the ridge. Shaffer made no mention of any intermediate peak on his travel to Rocky Knob.

Shaffer therefore likely continued on the BRP 0.9 miles further to a low point on the ridge (10.5 miles from Meadows of Dan), where there was apparently an access point from the BRP to the NPS trail the AT was following, and intercepted the AT at that point (at AT mile 12.44). With the 1.43 miles of the AT up Rocky Knob from that point under heavy tree cover, his description of “stumbling into Rocky Knob by starlight” would be consistent with his following that route.

By his leaving the AT at the VSR 610 intersection with U.S. 58 that morning and traveling by U.S. 58 to Meadows of Dan and from there by the BRP to the Rocky Knob Recreation Area, Shaffer thereby failed to hike the 12.41 miles of the AT between U.S. 58 and the point at which he left the BRP to travel the AT in that Rocky Knob Area.

Shaffer spent the night of April 7<sup>th</sup> at the stone shelter on Rocky Knob.

From the summit of Rocky Knob, the AT (north) followed an NPS trail, passing a BRP parking overlook (“The Saddle”) at 0.31 miles, and then crossing the BRP at 0.9 miles. After crossing the BRP, the AT followed a farm road along and then descending from a ridge to intersect VSR 716 at 1.66 miles. After turning right on VSR 716, the AT followed that unpaved road to intersect the BRP at 2.78 miles, then followed the BRP 0.55 miles to Tuggle Gap, where Va. 8 intersected the BRP (3.33 miles from the shelter on Rocky Knob). The AT exited the BRP at Tuggle Gap to follow Va. 8 north for .28 miles before turning right (north) on an unpaved road (VSR 709). That point was 3.61 AT miles north of the shelter at Rocky Knob.

In LBN (at 53-54) Shaffer noted that he “took two pics Sat. morning [May 8<sup>th</sup>] and left after breakfast.” Shaffer then reported that he

[p]romptly strayed from trail after crossing parkway and walked several extra miles. Came to hard road and followed it to AT crossing.

Shaffer’s LBN narrative therefore describes his following the AT, without apparent confusion, until it crossed the BRP, 0.9 miles from the shelter. His report that he then “strayed from the trail” probably reflects his losing the AT at a point 0.26 miles north of the BRP crossing, where the AT turned right off the crest of the ridge (in an area then open fields) to follow a farm road. The 1950 Guide had a cautionary note for northbound hikers, suggesting Shaffer could have walked past that turn. If he did walk past that turn, and did not backtrack to relocate the AT marking ceased but instead continued ahead, Shaffer could have thereby “strayed” off the AT.

Because of the particular landscape of that area, Shaffer’s failure to backtrack once he lost the AT could well have caused him to walk the “several extra miles” mentioned in LBN. Through that area, the BRP was located on the crest of the Blue Ridge while two unpaved secondary roads (VSR 716/Tuggle Gap Rd. and VSR 720/Fairview Church Rd.) formed a continuous road boundary just east of the NPS Rocky Knob property.<sup>24</sup> An AT hiker like Shaffer who strayed from the AT after crossing the BRP and continued downgrade would therefore intersect a road within ½ mile. The complication was that while on the right side of the ridge VSR 716 (and the AT) led right to the BRP and Tuggle Gap, a descent ahead or to the left side of the ridge would instead intersect VSR 720<sup>25</sup>. Where a right on VSR 716 led east along the AT to Tuggle Gap, a right on VSR 720 led first past VSR 716 (intersecting from the right), then north app. 2.3 miles to Va. 8 at a point app. 1.8 miles north of Tuggle Gap.

From the LBN narrative, it appears that Shaffer did stray from the AT as he described.

It is possible to actually follow Shaffer’s course of travel after he crossed the BRP on the AT on the morning of May 8<sup>th</sup>. The 1948 AT (north) followed a farm road through a field in what is now “Loop B” of the Rocky Knob Campground, then turned right to descend from the ridge (still following the farm road) down the ridge to VSR 716. That turn off the ridge was in the vicinity of the intersection of “Loop C” with “Loop B” in the campground. The old road off the ridge that was the old AT route is overgrown but still intact, is on NPS property, and still reaches VSR 716 (immediately to the right of a private driveway).<sup>26</sup>

When Shaffer missed that turn off the ridge and failed to backtrack when AT markings disappeared, he would have proceeded through what is now “Loop C” of the campground, then off the end of the ridge into the upper valley of the West Fork of Dodd Creek. If he continued downgrade (which he likely would have), he would have intercepted VSR 716 where it crossed that creek – with the AT intersecting that same road less than 200’ to his right. Shaffer apparently instead

turned left, and almost immediately intersected VSR 720 (or somehow otherwise ended on that road). He then walked north on VSR 720 (apparently not consulting a compass) away from the BRP and the crest of the Blue Ridge approximately 2.3 miles to Va. 8. At that point, undoubtedly realizing by that time he had strayed, he turned right on Va. 8 and, after approximately 1.8 miles, saw AT blazes on both Va. 8 ahead and an unpaved road to the left as he reached the intersection of Va. 8 and VSR 709, 0.3 miles from the BRP at Tuggle Gap. He had come onto the AT in reverse direction, with the AT south ahead on Va. 8 and the unpaved road to the left (VSR 709) the AT north.

Shaffer therefore hiked app. 5.8 miles, of which 1.16 miles was on the AT, to reach a point 3.61 AT miles north of the shelter on Rocky Knob. By that scenario, he would have, as he described in LBN, walked more than 2 extra miles by his straying off the AT after crossing the BRP.

Shaffer's SR48 report is consistent with that scenario, in that he reported that he "[t]ried to follow trail, but markings faded out and I strayed to the west,<sup>27</sup> finally striking road which I followed to the Parkway." In WWS (at 59), Shaffer reported that the AT marking "faded" after about "a mile" from the shelter in "an overgrown field." That is also consistent with the LBN scenario.

Shaffer's reports in WWS and SR48 as to fading markings in the Rocky Knob Recreation Area are confusing, since the AT through that BRP area was marked only by metal AT markers, rather than blazes.<sup>28</sup> It is notable that Shaffer does not note any lack of marking in LBN, but only that he "strayed" from the AT. All those narratives therefore support the conclusion that Shaffer strayed from the AT not because of "faded" markings, but rather by missing a turn. As has been seen in the record of Shaffer's hike, he often noted "faded markings" when he strayed from the AT, failed to backtrack to relocate the AT, and instead continued ahead observing such "faded" marking during non-AT travel.

Shaffer's straying from the AT on May 8<sup>th</sup> and his circuitous travel to relocate the AT displays the same characteristics that marked many of Shaffer's navigational decisions. After he left the shelter on Rocky Knob, he following an apparently marked AT for approximately a mile when, to his observation, the AT marking suddenly "faded." The AT had not actually disappeared. Shaffer had simply missed a turn. But instead of stopping, backtracking to a known point on the AT, and relocating the Trail, Shaffer apparently just kept going until he randomly intercepted a road. He again knew he wasn't on the AT, but he decided to make his own way. As was seen in past cases, Shaffer just kept going in a wrong direction, with no sign of the AT, until his course of travel was confronted with some feature so obvious that his misdirection could no longer be ignored.

As a result of the navigational decisions made by Shaffer on May 7<sup>th</sup>, he had failed to hike the 12.41 miles of the AT between the point on U.S. 58 where he had left the AT that morning and the point at which he left the BRP to travel the AT to Rocky Knob that night.

As a result of the navigational decisions made by Shaffer on May 8<sup>th</sup>, he had failed to hike the 2.16 miles of the AT from his point of straying from the AT that morning to Tuggle Gap, and the 0.28 miles of AT from Tuggle Gap to the intersection of Va. 8 and VSR 709, for a total AT mileage of 2.44 miles.

On May 7- 8, 1948, Shaffer therefore failed to hike 14.85 (85%) of the 17.45 miles of the AT from where he had left the AT on U.S. 58 on May 7<sup>th</sup> to the intersection of Va. 8 and VSR 709 at Tuggle Gap on May 8<sup>th</sup>.

#### **E. Tuggle Gap (Va. 8) - Adney Gap: May 8-9, 1948**

After straying from the AT in the Rocky Knob Recreation Area early on May 8<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer followed VSR 720 north and then Va. 8 south back toward the BRP/AT corridor at Tuggle Gap.

By that route, he found himself at an intersection on Va. 8, 0.28 miles north of Tuggle Gap, with AT markings on an unpaved road to the left (VSR 709) and ahead, on paved Va. 8. Ahead on Va. 8 was south on the AT, and to the left on VSR 709 was north.

From that intersection, the 1948 AT followed unpaved secondary roads to 10.36 miles (from the VSR 709 - Va. 8 intersection), then followed an NPS trail through the BRP Smart View Recreation Area for 1.9 miles to 12.26 miles. The AT then returned to secondary roads to 21.49 miles, then followed a trail within the BRP corridor for 1.48 miles<sup>29</sup> to 22.91 miles where the AT turned left on VSR 610, an unpaved secondary road. At that point, the BRP was 150 yds. to the right (1950 Guide at 14-329) at a point app. ½ mi. south of the BRP Pine Spur Overlook.

After turning onto VSR 610, the AT continued on secondary roads west of the BRP to 28.35 miles, then followed U.S. 221 for 0.53 miles before turning right on VSR 643 up Sweet Anne Hollow to cross under a BRP overpass and then turn left onto a woods road at 29.77 miles.<sup>30</sup> The AT then followed woods roads and trails over the cleared summit of Smith Mt.,<sup>31</sup> at 30.42 miles, before descending steeply to intersect and turn right on BRP at 30.85 miles. After 0.46 miles following that highway, the AT turned left off the BRP at 31.31 miles. Ahead on the BRP was Adney Gap.<sup>32</sup>

As the AT left the BRP at that point, it began a wide swing to the west around the Roanoke Valley that would carry it over Poor Mt. to Glenvar, on U.S. 11 just south of Salem, then over Ft. Lewis Mt. to Mason Cove (on Va. 311) and beyond to Tinker Mt., the modern AT corridor, and Cloverdale, on U.S. 11 north of Roanoke.

The AT from the intersection of VSR 709 and Va. 8 near Tuggle Gap to the point where the AT left the BRP near Adney Gap was 31.31 miles in length. While it primarily followed roads, there were 3 trail/woods roads sections that totaled 4.46 miles in length.

Early in the day on May 8, 1948, Shaffer turned left from Va. 8 onto VSR 709, with Tuggle Gap and the BRP ahead on Va. 8. He was then northbound on that section of AT from Tuggle Gap to Adney Gap.

In SR48, Shaffer reported that he “hiked on to Smart View Park.” That report is therefore ambiguous as to whether Shaffer followed the BRP or the AT from Tuggle Gap to Smart View.

The LBN narrative is, however, clear. Within ½ mile of leaving Va. 8, Shaffer was back on the BRP, having decided to abandon walking the AT on the unpaved VSR 709 in favor of the grassy shoulders of the BRP. In LBN (at 54) Shaffer reported that he

Decided to follow Parkway a while since trail parallels it on dirt roads  
and its easier walking on grass along Pwy.

After leaving Va. 8, VSR 709 ran parallel to the BRP for app. 3 miles, with the BRP first to the right of VSR 709, then to the left after VSR 709 crossed the BRP at 1.5 miles. In that first 1.5 miles, there were several informal connector roads linking VSR 709 to the BRP to the right. Shaffer therefore used one of those connectors, probably within ½ mile of Va. 8, to move from the AT and VSR 709 to the BRP.

Shaffer described in LBN (at 54) how, as he was walking the BRP “about a mile” from Va. 8, BRP Ranger Bill Lord<sup>33</sup> stopped to offer Shaffer a ride, which Shaffer reported that he “[r]efused, as usual.” Shaffer described having a “long gabfest” with Lord, which was joined by a “smoke chaser” who happened along in a fire truck. Shaffer reported in WWS (at 60) that Lord had heard of him at the Meadows of Dan store. After the BRP personnel left, Shaffer continued to hike along the BRP to Smart View Recreation Area, where he camped the night of May 8th.

In LBN (at 54), Shaffer stated that when he decided to move from VSR 709 and the AT to the BRP, it was just for “a while.” Shaffer, however, reports no effort to relocate the AT that day in WWS or LBN. If he had intended to rejoin the AT, he would have had to exit the BRP soon after he had joined it, since the VSR 709 crossing of the BRP 1.5 miles from Va. 8 was the last contact of the AT with the BRP for 7.74 miles. While the roads followed by the AT closely paralleled the BRP for the first 1.5 miles after leaving Va. 8, those roads moved away from the BRP after that point, and the AT did not cross the BRP again for 7.74 miles.

Whatever Shaffer’s intentions may have been, he did not return to the AT that day. Instead, he walked the 11 miles of the BRP to the Smart View Recreation Area. Although the AT followed an NPS trail through the Smart View Area, none of Shaffer’s narratives mention following such a trail.

It was 11.63 miles on the AT from Va. 8 to the picnic area at Smart View. Assuming Shaffer followed VSR 709 for at least 0.5 miles before diverting to the BRP, he failed to walk 11.13 miles of that AT mileage on May 8, 1948.

The following day (May 9<sup>th</sup>) was a Sunday. Shaffer’s several narratives are confusing, or even contradictory, as to his course of travel that day.

It seems certain that Shaffer left the Smart View Area on the BRP, thereby failing to hike the remaining 0.93 miles of the AT as it followed an NPS trail through that area.

In SR48, Shaffer stated that on May 9<sup>th</sup>, he “[f]ollowed Parkway on to where Trail turns west of Roanoke at Bent Mtn.” By that report, Shaffer reports following the BRP from Smart View the app. 17.1 miles to the point where the AT turned off the BRP to proceed west, away from the BRP corridor. It was that point that Shaffer referred to in SR48 as “where Trail turns west of Roanoke at Bent Mtn.”

WWS and LBN report, however, that Shaffer followed some portion of the AT that day.

The WWS account (at 61) provides no details as to the AT on that day except for one description of his observation from the BRP at a point “northward” of Pine Spur Overlook of a distant AT “traceable next to a parallel dirt road, along which I came to a store.”

In LBN (at 55-56), Shaffer reported that as he left Smart View at about 9:00 on May 9<sup>th</sup>, he “. . . decided to stay on trail” to avoid heavy Sunday traffic on the Parkway. Despite that intention, Shaffer reported that he “missed the turn” to follow the AT, so he “followed parkway.” Within the first 2½ miles of the BRP north of Smart View, the AT crossed the BRP four times. The BRP turned north at that point as the AT continued northeast, causing the routes to separate. The next AT crossing of the BRP was 4.38 AT miles ahead (2.9 miles on the BRP). Shaffer apparently missed those several opportunities to rejoin the AT, and instead continued to walk the BRP.

Shaffer described (in LBN at 56), feeling “sleepy” at noon and sleeping “under pines.” Those pines could well have been at the many pine trees at Pine Spur Overlook, and it is possible that Shaffer walked the 10.1 miles on the BRP from Smart View to Pine Spur Overlook by noon. He described then waking up feeling “rocky and had tough time getting going,” and finally noticing in the “afternoon” “. . . trail on road paralleling parkway and turned onto it, vowing to stick to it.”

Shaffer’s placing that portion of the AT he followed north of Pine Spur Overlook (in WWS) or in the afternoon of that day do not, however, appear consistent with the BRP/AT relationship in that area. As previously discussed, the BRP had no direct contact with the AT north of Pine Spur Overlook<sup>34</sup> for approximately 8 miles. There was, approximately 2 miles north of Pine Spur

Overlook, a short section of VSR 647 and the AT that was parallel to the BRP for about ½ mile, with two connecting roads. But there is no mention in any of the Guides of a store along that road, and if Shaffer had left the BRP in that area he would have ended up walking along U.S. 221, then up Sweet Anne Hollow and under the BRP in following the AT. He reported no such experiences in the course of his May 9<sup>th</sup> hike. In addition, none of Shaffer's narratives mentions the trail section of the 1948 AT across Smith Mt. that Shaffer would have hiked on May 9<sup>th</sup> if he had been following the AT.

One could disregard Shaffer's reports in LBN and WWS and simply rely on the SR48 report that he followed the BRP all day. But it is possible to include the LBN and WWS accounts of Shaffer following the AT for some distance on May 9<sup>th</sup> if the sequence of events are changed. The only part of the AT that would generally fit those narratives would be a crossing of the BRP by the AT (then following VSR 678) 7.35 miles north of Smart View where the 1950 Guide noted a store (the former Kelly School) 150' off the BRP on the AT. If Shaffer left the BRP at that point to visit that store, he could have followed the AT for 2.65 miles to return to the BRP at a point app. 1.6 miles south of Pine Spur Overlook. The AT actually turned off the road it was following (VSR 642) onto a trail just before the road intersected the BRP, but if Shaffer missed that turn-off (or disregarded it to continue to the BRP visible ahead), he would have ended up back on the BRP after that 2.65 miles of AT.

The SR48 report has Shaffer failing to hike the entire 19.96 AT miles from Smart View Recreation Area to the point "where Trail turns west of Roanoke at Bent Mtn." Incorporating in an out-of-sequence fashion the confusing reports in LBN and WWS of Shaffer following some part of the AT in that area, it is possible that Shaffer walked 2.65 miles of the AT in the course of his travels up the BRP corridor that day.

For the purposes of this report, it will be assumed that Shaffer did walk that 2.65 mile section of AT. He therefore followed, on May 9, 1948, 2.65 miles of the 19.96 miles of the AT between Smart View Recreation Area and the point (south of Adney Gap) where the AT turned off the BRP to proceed west, away from the BRP corridor.

As has been noted, on May 8<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer hiked approximately 0.5 miles of the 11.35 miles of the AT from the intersection of VSR 709 with Va. 8, at Tuggle Gap, to Smart View Recreation Area.

On May 8 - 9, Shaffer hiked approximately 3.15 miles of the 31.31 miles of the AT from the intersection of VSR 709 with Va. 8, at Tuggle Gap, to the point (south of Adney Gap) where the AT turned off the BRP to proceed west, over Poor Mt. and toward Glenvar on U.S. 11, south of Salem.

#### **F. Summary, The Blue Ridge of Southern Virginia: May 5 - 9, 1948**

On May 5 - 6, 1948, Shaffer failed to hike 18.05 of the 19.52 miles of the AT between Pipers Gap and Groundhog Mt. He instead followed the BRP for approximately 17 miles between those points, including the total 1.0 miles that the AT followed the BRP through that distance.

On May 6 - 7, 1948, Shaffer followed the AT for the entire 17.54 miles from Groundhog Mt. to U.S. 58.

On May 7 - 8, 1948, Shaffer failed to hike 14.85 (85%) of the 17.45 miles of the AT from where he had left the AT on U.S. 58 on May 7<sup>th</sup> to the intersection of Va. 8 and VSR 709 at Tuggle Gap on May 8<sup>th</sup>.

On May 8 - 9, Shaffer failed to hike 28.16 (89.9%) of the 31.31 miles of the AT from the intersection of VSR 709 with Va. 8, at Tuggle Gap, to the point (south of Adney Gap) where the AT turned off the BRP to proceed west, over Poor Mt. and to Glenvar, on U.S. 11, south of Salem.

In summary, therefore, during the period May 5 - 9, 1948, Shaffer failed to hike a calculated 61.06 (71.1%) of the 85.82 miles of the AT between Pipers Gap and the point near Adney Gap at which the AT turned west, away from the Blue Ridge and the BRP. That overall percentage actually overstates the extent of contact Shaffer had with the AT between those points. His record of AT hiking between those points reflects his following one extended section of the AT 17.54 miles in length (from Groundhog Mt. to U.S. 58 on May 6-7), and otherwise following multiple separated, short sections of the AT scattered throughout the 85.82 mile distance while primarily following the BRP. In fact, about 60% of Shaffer's AT mileage between those points was traveled in that single 17.54 mile section between Groundhog Mt. and U.S. 58 on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

While following the AT for only 24.76 of the 85.82 miles between Pipers Gap and Adney Gap on May 5 - 9, 1948, Shaffer walked the BRP for approximately 50 miles<sup>35</sup> between those points, about twice as far as he followed the AT.

At about noon on May 5, 1948, Shaffer was introduced (perhaps having never seen it before) to the BRP at Pipers Gap, on the crest of the Blue Ridge. What is obvious from the record is that Shaffer, like multitudes of travelers before and after him, fell immediately under the spell of that magnificently engineered scenic highway through the extraordinary natural and cultural landscape of the Virginia Blue Ridge. With the exception of hiking the 17.54 miles of the AT from Groundhog Mt. to U.S. 58 on May 6<sup>th</sup> and early on the 7<sup>th</sup>, that apparent fascination with the BRP caused the primary focus of Shaffer's travel, and his photography, on May 5 - 9 1948, to be the BRP, not the AT.

Shaffer's delight in the BRP is obvious in his narratives – its certain location on the road maps Shaffer was depending upon for navigation, the grassy shoulders that were easy on his feet, the mileposts to measure his progress, the overlooks, and the recreation areas in which to camp. In contrast, from Shaffer's road map dependent perspective, the AT followed an uncertain course along the unpaved rural roads, often with a sometimes-hard-on-the-feet gravel surface, he saw on either side of, and frequently intersecting, the BRP.

What is also obvious in the record is Shaffer's enjoyment of the contact he had with Ranger Bill Lord and the other BRP employees who visited with him and gave him the recognition as a long-distance hiker he was seeking. That contact, along with all the people of the area who greeted, assisted, or just waved at Shaffer as he passed inspired him to make an entry in LBN for May 8<sup>th</sup> (at 54 -55) that rings with exuberance. As he noted an invitation for him to return to visit (with Ranger Lord), he then wrote

I figure if I ever tried to look up all my friends, I'd die of old age  
somewhere along the way.

The problem for Shaffer, with that apparent fascination with the BRP, is that the record of his 1948 hike from Pipers Gap to the point near Adney Gap at which the AT turned west, away from the Blue Ridge and the BRP, on May 5 - 9, 1948, is not impressive in terms of his actually following the AT. He did not look for, find, or follow the AT as much he should have if he intended to legitimately claim to have hiked the entire AT. What Shaffer did find and follow extensively in the Virginia Blue Ridge was a road - - the Blue Ridge Parkway - - that he enjoyed walking and an abundance of friendly folks with which to visit and talk.

Without the sure course and the amenities of the BRP, the AT route along the old rural roads of the Virginia Blue Ridge obviously could not compete for Shaffer's attention against the lure of walking the BRP.

## CHAPTER 13 ADDITIONAL CASE STUDIES: VIRGINIA

There are three additional areas of particular interest as to Shaffer's navigational decisions along the 1948 AT in Virginia that will be addressed in this Report. The first is Ft. Lewis Mt., near Salem, Va., on May 10 - 11, 1948. The second is his travels from Cloverdale, on U.S. 11 north of Roanoke, to Apple Orchard Mt. on May 13-14, 1948. The third is his route from the community of Love, Va., to Rockfish Gap on May 18, 1948.

### **A. Fort Lewis Mountain: May 10-11, 1948**

On May 9-10, 1948, Shaffer followed the 20.41 miles of the AT, without reported difficulty in navigation, from where it left the BRP south of Adney Gap to Glenvar, on U.S. 11, which he reached on the evening of May 10<sup>th</sup>. Finding it too late to go into Salem to check for mail, he followed the AT, again without reported difficulty, up Ft. Lewis Mountain on the AT. The 1948 AT climbed that mountain by a secondary road, then a trail, up Stypes Branch. In LBN (at 58), Shaffer reporting hiking "several miles" up the mountain to a camp (a "mile or so" in SR48), apparently with the intent of returning to Glenvar the next morning to go into Salem.

On the morning of May 11<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer decided to proceed north on the AT to the "next road and catch ride back to Salem rather than walk back down to Glenvar" (LBN at 58). He climbed Ft. Lewis Mt., passing near the top an old cabin near a spring.<sup>1</sup> As Shaffer started hiking again on May 11<sup>th</sup>, he had hiked the AT from the BRP to Glenvar and beyond to Ft. Lewis Mt. without any reported difficulty following the Trail. That entire distance, and the AT north from Glenvar, was maintained by the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club.<sup>2</sup>

Less than 0.1 miles from the old cabin, the AT, then following a trail, met a road (apparently unimproved), at 4.14 miles from U.S. 11. At that point it turned left on that road. Since the AT had been on this route since no later than 1934, it was an established route. It was part of the same maintenance area<sup>3</sup> section of AT traveled by Shaffer for almost 25 miles on May 9-10 without any reported problems in marking. It can therefore be presumed it was a turn marked by AT blazes and/or markers. Shaffer, however, turned right, rather than left to follow the AT, on the road "and followed along ridge" (LBN at 59), thereby straying from the AT. In SR48, Shaffer describes making a "wrong turn," suggesting he was aware at some point that he had left the blazed AT.

After the blazes disappeared, Shaffer did not backtrack. He described in SR48 how he continued hiking until he "blundered" into a game refuge,<sup>4</sup> where a refuge employee set him "straight." Shaffer then stated (in SR48) that he then "came on to route 311" where he "caught a ride into Salem to pick up mail" before he "[c]ontinued on and camped on Catawba Mt. by the waterfall."

The SR48 narrative gives the impression that after Shaffer got reoriented at the game refuge, he backtracked to the AT. In LBN (at 60), however, Shaffer makes it clear that he did not backtrack, but instead continued through the game refuge directly to Va. 311. In LBN, he stated that the game refuge employee "directed me how to get to route 311," that he thereafter "[f]ollowed CCC road, finally arrived and hitchhiked to town, no mail."

WWS (at 62) presents a narrative consistent with LBN of Shaffer's straying from the AT on May 11<sup>th</sup>. In WWS, he noted that AT "marking was bad and I soon went astray" after leaving the cabin in the morning of May 11<sup>th</sup>. Again, he did not backtrack once the "marking was bad," but continued ahead. He then reported coming to a gate (at app. 2.2 miles from the AT<sup>5</sup>) and saw on the gate "a sign too weathered to read" but that Shaffer assumed "concerned vehicular traffic." It can

be assumed the sign read, or had read at one time, some directive like “Do Not Enter.”

Shaffer apparently knew he was not on the AT at that gate. But he did not backtrack. Instead, he continued past the gate into the game refuge. He then encountered a man (apparently a game refuge employee) who was quite irate with him for having entered the area. Shaffer recounted that after the man “simmered down,” he “even allowed me to get water from the spring before taking the shortest route out of the sanctuary.” From that report, it appears that the game refuge employee allowed him to pick his own route out of the refuge.

In WWS (at 62), he described determining from his map that the AT crossed “Route 311 near Salem so I followed woods roads in that direction, finally arriving at the town.” Shaffer therefore traveled through the game refuge on Ft. Lewis Mt. by the “CCC Road” to Va. 311, arriving at a point near Mason Cove. From there, he hitchhiked into Salem, finally reaching the post office but finding he had no mail.

Once in Salem, Shaffer could see from his map that he could conveniently return to the AT at Glenvar by U.S. 11 to hike the section of AT he had missed, with only the 4.14 miles of the AT to the road where he strayed the day before required to be retraced. He did not, however, return to Glenvar and the AT. Instead, after his visit to Salem, he hitched a ride out to the AT crossing of Va. 311 and rejoined the AT at that point (WWS at 62).

Shaffer therefore hiked on May 10 - 11, 1948, 4.14 of the 17.24 miles of the AT from Glenvar, Va., where the AT crossed U.S. 11 south of Salem, Va., to Mason Cove, where the AT crossed Va. 311, thereby failing to hike 13.1 miles of the AT between those points.

## **B. Cloverdale - Apple Orchard Mt.: May 13-14, 1948**

Shaffer was at Bearwallow Gap, just finishing up his breakfast at a “twig fire,” on May 14, 1948, when Ranger Jim Luck pulled up in his Forest Service truck. He had reached that gap after spending the night just south of there. He had crossed U.S. 11, at Cloverdale, late on May 12<sup>th</sup>, where he had stopped for supplies. He bivouacked beyond Cloverdale that night (May 12<sup>th</sup>).

Shaffer was unaware as he walked north on the AT from Cloverdale that he was entering a “gap” in the AT, from Cloverdale to Black Horse Gap, that had not yet been completed as a relocated trail from the pre-BRP location that had officially ceased to exist. With construction of the BRP, the old AT route north from Cloverdale had been officially abandoned with publication of the 1940 Guide. That Guide (at 14-309) generally reviewed the planned relocation of the AT from the James River to Cloverdale, but offered no detailed trail data for the future AT route.

The 1950 Guide (at 14-309a, 309b, 309b1 and 309b2) noted that the relocated AT from Cloverdale to Black Horse Gap had been constructed in 1948-49. That trail followed secondary roads for 2.96 miles from Cloverdale, then ascended by trail to Fullhart Knob. There was a fire lookout tower on that summit in 1949. Beyond Fullhart Knob, the new AT followed the crest of the ridge for 3 miles to Salt Pond Road, then dropped below the crest of the ridge to travel along the north slope for 5.4 miles to Black Horse Gap.

The former AT route from Cloverdale to Black Horse Gap had last been detailed in the 1938 Supplement. It followed the same roads as the newer AT for 2.94 miles, but turned right (southeast) on VSR 652 at the point where the new AT turned left. After that turn, the ‘34 AT followed VSR 652 to turn left (north) at an intersection (at 4.34 miles from Cloverdale) onto a farm road just after passing VSR 658 to the right. The old AT turned left at that point, while VSR 652 continued ahead approximately 0.6 miles to the BRP corridor.

After turning left from VSR 652, the '34 AT followed a farm road that deteriorated into a woods road as it ascended to a saddle that was 6.47 miles from Cloverdale. That saddle was in the BRP corridor. The old AT then dropped into a stream valley below the eventual location of the BRP (above current VSR 616) which it followed upstream to cross the crest, and the future BRP, at Curry Gap (unnamed in '38 Guide) at a point 8 miles from Cloverdale. After a descent into stream valley on the opposite side of the crest and an ascent back to the crest (again crossing the future BRP), the old AT followed the crest of the ridge to the old Fincastle Road (Black Horse Gap) at 12.3 miles from Cloverdale.

It is unlikely that the 1948-49 relocated AT would have been complete in May 1948. From Shaffer's description of his May 14<sup>th</sup> hike, it does not appear that he followed that relocated AT, since he made no mention of Fullhart Knob or the use of trails. It appears instead that he followed the old marking of the former AT route.<sup>6</sup> He described in SR48 following "up road, then onto Parkway under construction." In WWS (at 63-64) Shaffer reported that the Trail "turned along roads through a residential district" before he came to the BRP, under construction. In LBN ( 62), Shaffer reported several instances of coming into contact with local residents as he walked a road route to the BRP construction. From that description, it sounds most likely that Shaffer followed old AT blazes on VSR 652, failed to notice the faded blazes where the old AT turned off VSR 652 onto the farm road, and continued on VSR 652 to intercept the BRP construction where it crossed that secondary road.

From Shaffer's casual narrative in WWS and SR48, it is apparent that he never appreciated how fortunate he was in his travels that day. With the new AT apparently not yet constructed,<sup>7</sup> Shaffer apparently followed the old AT blazes east on VSR 652. Once he missed the turn onto the farm road at 4.34 miles, he was headed for U.S. 460, on the other side of the ridge, at the community of Blue Ridge. If not for the BRP construction<sup>8</sup> he intercepted, he would have had a much more difficult time finding his way to the crest of the ridge.

After reaching the BRP construction, Shaffer followed it under the impression that it was "obliterating the Trail" (WWS at 64). In LBN (at 63), Shaffer's description of his travel suggests, contrary to his impression in WWS, that he may have actually followed part of the old AT in that area. He noted that at some point after he reached the BRP construction at "about 9:15," the "Trail cut down valley and came out at end of construction." That description is consistent with his having followed a section of the 1934 AT app. 1½ miles in length from the point at which the BRP reached the crest of the ridge, and crossed the '34 AT route, to Curry Gap ('34 Guide at 133).<sup>9</sup>

Shaffer reported (in WWS at 64) reaching the "head of construction" and continuing on from there. The "head of construction" at that time was apparently Curry Gap. He describes reaching the end of construction at what was probably Curry Gap, then "went on and up ridge, took pics, one of Peaks of Otter in distance." The 1934 AT followed, in part, the crest of that ridge to Black Horse Gap, with a "splendid view" noted from Blue Knob along that ridge ('34 Guide at 132-33).<sup>10</sup>

Black Horse Gap was, at that time, the southern end of a completed, but apparently not yet paved, section of the BRP that extended to Bearwallow Gap. Crossing the crest of the ridge and intersecting the BRP at Black Horse Gap was Old Fincastle Rd. (VSR 606).

In addition to the southern end of a section of the BRP, Black Horse Gap was also the southern end of the relocated AT from Bearwallow Gap that had been constructed in 1940-41.<sup>11</sup> That section of the AT intersected Old Fincastle Rd. 50 yds. to the west of the BRP and the crest. South of Black Horse Gap, the new AT had not yet been constructed, and would not be until 1949-50.<sup>12</sup> The old AT leading into Black Horse Gap from the south, which was a trail along the crest of the ridge, was, however, apparently still passable and was followed by Shaffer. With the AT route intersecting Old Fincastle Road only 50 yds. west of the BRP, even a cursory scout by Shaffer for the AT at Black Horse Gap would have located the Trail.

Shaffer's comments on Black Horse Gap do not mention, however, Old Fincastle Rd., the AT, or any effort made by Shaffer to scout east or west on that road to locate the AT. Instead, he noted in LBN (at 63) that he "came to P-way (gravel-closed)." In WWS (at 64), he reported that "[t]oward evening the Parkway appeared again, finished except for black-topping." He was apparently describing Black Horse Gap.

Shaffer's SR48 report is ambiguous as to his course of travel from Curry Gap (the "head of construction"). He reported reaching the "end of construction" (Curry Gap) and then camping "about a mile short of Bearwallow Gap." That report fails to mention his reaching the completed BRP section (at Black Horse Gap), or the AT. Both LBN and WWS establish, however, that Shaffer followed the BRP from where he found it at Black Horse Gap.

Shaffer therefore followed the gravel BRP from Black Horse Gap. The AT crossed the BRP 1.05 miles (on the AT) from Bearwallow Gap, skirted the Goose Creek Overlook for 200' at 1.94 miles, crossed the BRP again at 2.49 miles, then crossed it for a third time at 5.73 miles. Given the extensive contact between the AT and BRP, Shaffer would have had repeated opportunities to leave the BRP to walk the AT. But Shaffer made no mention in any of his narratives of the AT between Black Horse Gap and Bearwallow Gap. Instead, he reported that he found the BRP and followed it to a point about one mile south of Bearwallow Gap, where he camped (WWS at 64, LBN at 63).

Shaffer's describes his camping spot in SR48 as about one mile south of Bearwallow Gap "on the mountain top" and in WWS (at 64) as "on top of a knoll." Such a description would match Shaffer having camped on the mountain crest in the vicinity of the BRP Mills Gap Overlook, 0.5 BRP miles south of Bearwallow Gap, where the BRP leaves that narrow ridge to descend to Bearwallow Gap.<sup>13</sup>

Shaffer reported in all his narratives that he came to a gap<sup>14</sup> on the morning of May 14<sup>th</sup> where he had breakfast. He makes no mention of the AT in those reports. Furthermore, having camped within a mile of Bearwallow Gap while on the BRP, he would have passed by that time his last opportunity to join the AT at its crossing of the BRP at the BRP Sharp Top Overlook, 1.5 miles south of Bearwallow Gap on the BRP.<sup>15</sup>

Shaffer reported that he had breakfast, and shaved, at that "roadside spring" at the gap (i.e., Bearwallow Gap) on the morning of May 14<sup>th</sup> (LBN at 63).<sup>16</sup> He would have therefore exited the BRP to Bearwallow Gap, probably in search of a water source. In doing so, he would have intersected the AT as it crossed under the BRP at Bearwallow Gap on VSR 695 (which turned into Va. 43 at the BRP). After a short distance on the highway (250' per the 1950 Guide), the AT turned off Va. 43 near a "wide spot" beside the road.<sup>17</sup> There was (and is) just such a "roadside spring" at that "wide spot," and that was very likely where Shaffer had breakfast on May 14, 1948. And it is almost certain that Shaffer knew he had relocated the AT at Bearwallow Gap as he had breakfast, given that he would have been on the AT for 250' after exiting the BRP and at that roadside spring where he breakfasted that morning.

Shaffer therefore likely followed the AT for .05 miles from the BRP to where the AT turned off the road. Other than that short distance, Shaffer walked the BRP instead of the AT from Black Horse Gap to Bearwallow Gap on May 13 - 14, 1948. He therefore hiked only .05 miles of the 7.45 miles of the AT between those points, and instead walked 6.6 miles of the BRP<sup>18</sup> and .05 miles of the AT on Va. 43, between those points.

It was by that course of travel on May 13-14 that Shaffer ended up at Bearwallow Gap on the morning of May 14, 1948, with Ranger Jim Luck as a visitor, as Shaffer was "about to leave" Bearwallow Gap. With no AT guidebook and navigating only by road maps (the route of the relocated AT was apparently not yet indicated on those maps), Shaffer could have, under normal

circumstances, therefore located and followed that relocated AT only by following AT markings.<sup>19</sup> His reference to being “about to leave” Bearwallow Gap was a likely reference to his intending to follow the AT north from Bearwallow Gap following those markings.

It is therefore very likely that Shaffer was having his breakfast in Bearwallow Gap with just such AT markings nearby to inform him of that relocation. If not, when “Ranger Jim Luck,” drove up in his Forest Service<sup>20</sup> truck to talk to the “Lone Trail-hiker” he had apparently heard about,<sup>21</sup> he informed Shaffer that the Peaks of Otter “had been rerouted off the AT” (SR48, WWS at 64). With Luck’s visit, Shaffer now had direct, personal information that the AT had been relocated, and an authoritative source as to location of the relocated AT.

The record therefore establishes that Shaffer knew of the relocated AT north from Bearwallow Gap when he was in Bearwallow Gap on May 14<sup>th</sup>.

Establishment of Shaffer’s actual knowledge of the relocated AT north of Bearwallow Gap is significant in that his failure to hike that section of relocated AT was specifically recognized and addressed by ATC Myron H. Avery in both his November 23, 1948, Memo No. 3 to the ATC Board and his November 27, 1948, letter to Shaffer.<sup>22</sup> In both, Avery noted Shaffer’s failure to hike that relocated section of AT, but assigned responsibility for that failure to Shaffer not knowing about the relocated AT because of Shaffer’s lack of availability of guidebooks. Avery therefore excused Shaffer’s failure to hike that section of the AT on the basis of his belief that Shaffer did not know about the relocated AT. With review of the entire record, which Avery did not have, it appears that Shaffer did know about that relocated AT.

With review of the entire record, which Avery did not have, it appears clear that Shaffer did know about that relocated AT. He did not, however, follow the AT out of Bearwallow Gap.

In SR48, Shaffer states that he and “Ranger James Luck” “[t]alked for a while, then he took me along to Peaks of Otter which he said had been rerouted off the AT.” In WWS (at 64), Shaffer reported that Luck “. . . insisted on driving me down a side road” to see some flowering rhododendron” and then “. . . persuaded me to go that way [i.e., to the Peaks of Otter], even though the Trail had been recently changed to by-pass it.” In LBN (at 63), he reported that he “went along to Peaks of Otter” with Luck.

Shaffer then rode with Ranger Luck in his vehicle to the Peaks of Otter.

Shaffer then described (in WWS) how he and Ranger Luck went up Sharp Top, visited with the tower man (who gave Shaffer some excess food from the lookout), then visited with Professor Ruskin S. Freer<sup>23</sup>, of Lynchburg College, and his class. Identifying himself as a “trail-hiker”<sup>24</sup> Shaffer visited with the class for “about an hour” and had his photograph taken in the course of that visit. Shaffer then descended from Sharp Top after that visit, and reported that “After that, the trek resumed” (WWS at 65).

In LBN (at 64), Shaffer described his meeting with Professor Freer and his class, as follows.

Coming down road, four cars came along, stopped, driving first car Prof. Freer of Lynchburg College, Pres of Lynchburg hiking club. Talked, introduced me to all kids, took my picture (glad I shaved this morn). Nice gang. ~~Went on~~ Tentative invite to show slides next autumn.

Shaffer obviously enjoyed meeting the Lynchburg College class.<sup>25</sup> He was obviously recognized as an AT thru-hiker, and he even accepted a “tentative invite” to show his AT slides later

that year, after completion of his AT hike.

As Shaffer visited Sharp Top at the Peaks of Otter on May 14<sup>th</sup> and accepted the attention paid him as a thru-hiker by Professor Freer and the Lynchburg College class, he was not on the AT. Ranger Luck and Professor Freer certainly knew Shaffer was not on the AT at Sharp Top. Luck knew that Shaffer had traveled from Bearwallow Gap to Sharp Top in a motor vehicle. But both undoubtedly assumed that Shaffer, as a thru-hiker, had simply paid a visit to the Peaks of Otter and would, of course, return to Bearwallow Gap to rejoin the AT after his visit to Sharp Top.

In SR48, Shaffer stated that he “[a]fterward went on and intercepted Parkway at Appleorchard Mtn.” That report to the ATC suggested, in an ambiguous fashion, that Shaffer returned to the AT.

That impression is not, however, correct. In LBN, Shaffer reported that he

Went on to Pwy and north to intercept trail. Cut trail on Apple Orchard Mtn. and went on up to fire tower.

Shaffer reported (in WWS at 65) “coming to Apple Orchard Mountain, and the relocated Trail,” by that reporting that he did not return to Bearwallow Gap, but instead walked north on the BRP.

Shaffer did not, then, return to Bearwallow Gap on May 14<sup>th</sup> after accepting a motor vehicle ride from there to the Peaks of Otter. Instead, he turned north on the BRP and traveled approximately 10 miles on the BRP to the “Upper Blue Ridge Parkway Crossing” of the AT, 0.65 miles north on the AT from the summit of Apple Orchard Mt. At that point, he turned south on the AT to climb to the fire tower on the summit. Shaffer apparently did not ascend that mountain to include it on his hike. Instead, he may have hoped that the tower man might share some food with him, as he was running very low on provisions.<sup>26</sup> Finding no one there, he “went on down and proceeded along trail till sunset and bedded down on top of a peak,” without supper from a lack of provisions (LBN at 64-65).

When Shaffer intercepted the AT at the Upper Blue Ridge Parkway Crossing on May 14<sup>th</sup> and ascended to the summit of Apple Orchard Mt., he had that day skipped the entire AT from Bearwallow Gap to Apple Orchard Mt., a total distance of 18.33 miles. He had instead traveled the BRP the 14.6 miles<sup>27</sup> between those points, and traveled by motor vehicle the 4.8 miles of that distance from Bearwallow Gap to the Peaks of Otter.

As previously noted, Shaffer had failed to hike 7.40 of the 7.45 miles of the AT between Black Horse Gap and Bearwallow Gap on May 13 - 14. He now had failed to hike the 18.33 miles of the AT between Bearwallow Gap and Apple Orchard Mt. on May 14, and traveled by motor vehicle 4.8 miles along the BRP in the process of skipping that section of the AT.

Shaffer had thereby failed to hike 25.73 of the 25.78 miles of the AT from Black Horse Gap to Apple Orchard Mt. during his travels on May 13 - 14, 1948, and had accepted the second motor vehicle ride on his 1948 hike (the first being from Fries to Galax, Va., on May 4, 1948) that caused him to skip some part of the AT.

### **C. Love - Rockfish Gap: May 18-19, 1948**

On the morning of May 18, 1948, Shaffer, as best can be determined from the available record, stood at the intersection of VSR 814 (Campbell’s Creek Road) and the BRP. The BRP was undoubtedly a welcome sight to Shaffer. After losing the AT the day before, he had made his way

by bushwhack and road walking to the BRP. He now had a well-defined route to the Shenandoah National Park.

The day before, Shaffer had lost the AT, either by straying from the AT in the vicinity of Spy Rock and Maintop Mt. (per the narrative in WWS, at 66) or by losing the AT in the vicinity of The Priest when the blazes ended at a yet-to-be-constructed AT (per SR48 and LBN at 35). By either route, he had ended up on Va. 56 after some difficult bushwhacking. He related in WWS stopping at the A. L. Hatter Store, which was near the intersection of Campbell's Creek Road (VSR 814) with Va. 56 in the community of Nash.

There was, in fact, an unfinished gap in the AT in that area. That gap was between The Priest and Three Ridges. According to the 1950 Guide, that gap extended (in 1949) 4.25 miles from the summit of The Priest to Va. 56 at the Tye River, and then 4.6 miles from Va. 56 to the summit of Three Ridges, for a total gap of 8.85 miles. Without knowing the construction schedule for the AT in 1948-49, it is not possible to say with certainty how far north the 1949 gap extended in 1948.<sup>28</sup>

So whether by straying from the AT, or confronting that construction gap, Shaffer found himself at the A. L. Hatter store in Nash late in the day of May 17<sup>th</sup>.

From that store at Nash, Shaffer described (in WWS at 67) walking "several miles along the road [Campbell's Creek Rd.] toward the ridge crest before stopping . . . " for the night. The next morning (May 18<sup>th</sup>) Shaffer continued to climb toward the crest of the ridge on Campbell's Creek Rd., passing just before reaching the crest VSR 684 (Chicken Hollow Ln.), intersecting from the left.<sup>29</sup> At the crest, VSR 814 intersected the BRP. Ahead on VSR 814, after an offset crossing of the BRP, was the rural community of Love.

From that intersection with the BRP near Love, Shaffer's various narratives present somewhat different versions of his route to his campsite that night at Rockfish Gap.

SR48 presents the simplest version. In that narrative, Shaffer reports following a road [VSR814] to Love, "passing through without realizing I was in a town," then going on "along Parkway to Rockfish Gap above Waynesboro." WWS (at 67) presents a similar, but more complex, narrative in reporting that Shaffer "reached and followed a dirt road paralleling the Parkway . . . " that "soon intercepted the Parkway." It then reports that Shaffer followed the BRP to "Humpback Mountain Overlook," then continued on the BRP to Rockfish Gap.

On the 1948 road network of that area,<sup>30</sup> both of those narratives can be followed past the BRP on VSR 814 through Love, but Shaffer's reports of getting back to the BRP are confusing in that VSR 814 veers away from the BRP after passing Love, then descends into the Back Creek Valley as the BRP remains on the ridge. While VSR 664 (Reeds Gap Road) connects VSR 814 further down the valley to the BRP, it would involve an extensive detour to return to the BRP if Shaffer did not join the BRP at Love but instead followed VSR 814 into the valley.

LBN (at 69) presents just such a narrative. It reports Shaffer following a road toward Love (i.e., VSR 814), then passed it without being aware of the community. Shaffer then describes talking to "[t]wo fellows in Model A" who informed him that he had passed Love and asked him if he "had the forest service key." He then reported that he then "followed road which they say goes to Waynesboro" with the BRP running "along mtn. above." He then reported that he followed that road "to road that leads to parkway, followed parkway to Rockfish Gap."

The LBN narrative therefore reports that Shaffer did, in fact, follow VSR 814 through and beyond Love, for approximately 3.2 miles and descending nearly 1,000', before turning back up the mountain on Reeds Gap Road (VSR 664) to intersect the BRP at Reeds Gap after 2 more miles and

an ascent of nearly 1,000'. From LBN, it appears that Shaffer may have believed that VSR 814 would cut back up to the BRP, and turned on VSR 664 toward the BRP when he realized that VSR 814 was going to continue down the valley.

Once at the BRP at Reeds Gap, all Shaffer's narratives report that he followed the BRP to Rockfish Gap, with a stop along the way at the "Humpback Gap Overlook" (WWS at 67). He camped that night near the BRP at Rockfish Gap (LBN at 70, SR48, WWS at 67).

What is common in all the narratives is, first, that the focus of Shaffer's travels on May 18<sup>th</sup> was the BRP and, two, that there is no mention of the AT nor of any effort to find or follow it.

The community of Love, which was mentioned by Shaffer in all his narratives, was significant in any relocation of the AT by Shaffer because on a road map of the era<sup>31</sup> it was the identified point at which the AT could again be located as it returned to a location parallel to, and to the east of, the BRP. A northbound AT hiker confronted with the gap in construction at Three Ridges - The Priest would logically direct their course to the vicinity of Love to relocate the AT.

About ½ mile southeast of Love was point at which the relocated (post-BRP) AT route intersected the old (pre-BRP) AT route along the Blue Ridge. North of that intersection, the 1948 AT still followed the original AT route. South of that point, the "new" AT (then still under construction) left the Blue Ridge to follow a relocated route over Three Ridges and The Priest. From that point of intersection, the "old" AT continued south on the Blue Ridge, following an old road to an intersection with VSR 814 in the community of Love. With construction of the BRP, the primary access to that road (now FS 306) became the BRP with the portion between the BRP and VSR 814 becoming a private drive.<sup>32</sup> From the BRP, FS 306 led approximately ½ mile to where the old AT turned off that road and approximately 1.4 miles to the new AT route (with the current Maupin Field Shelter on that old road) at a point 1.43 miles south of Reeds Gap.

An AT hiker looking to relocate the AT in the Love area would have logically turned north on the BRP at its intersection with VSR 814 (Campbells Creek Rd.), then looked for a reasonable route to turn right (east) from the BRP to intercept the AT, which was shown on a road map as being roughly parallel to the BRP to the east. After approximately ½ mile on the BRP, FS 306 would have presented itself as just such a route. Being the old AT, it was likely still marked with old, but still visible, blazes. A short walk east would have intercepted the relocated AT. That road would have therefore been then (as it is now) an obvious route east from the BRP to connect with the AT.

Shaffer was not, however, apparently looking for the AT when he reached the BRP on VSR 814 on the morning of May 18<sup>th</sup>. He did not turn north of the BRP at that intersection as would be logical to locate the AT. Instead, he turned south, then right on VSR 814, to continue to follow VSR 814 as it crossed the BRP at an offset intersection.<sup>33</sup> Shaffer was apparently looking not for the AT, but for the community of Love.<sup>34</sup> By doing so, he interposed, on his road map, the BRP between himself and the AT location to the east shown on his map. Other than the obscure connecting road back to the BRP at the FS 306 intersection, Shaffer had therefore cut himself off from the AT by his choice to follow VSR 814 rather than the BRP.

When Shaffer learned he was past Love and on his way to Waynesboro, he could have backtracked to Love and returned to the BRP to look for the AT. Instead, he continued ahead on VSR 814. Having committed himself to VSR 814, he ended up returning to the BRP by a more indirect route via VSR 814 into the Back Creek Valley and then VSR 664 to Reeds Gap.

Having not intercepted the AT in the Love area, Shaffer had another, and more obvious, opportunity to rejoin the AT when he returned to the BRP at Reeds Gap, 1.7 miles north of Love on the BRP. At that point, the BRP was crossed by VSR 664. Shaffer apparently approached the BRP

from the west on VSR 664. At that intersection, the AT crossed that same road 100 yds. east of the BRP, and was located "close to Park boundary fence . . ." as it left that road traveling north. After approximately ½ mile, the AT came into direct contact with the BRP as it "skirted , for .1 m., Devils Knob Parking Overlook on left."<sup>35</sup> Shaffer therefore had a convenient opportunity to rejoin the AT both at Reeds Gap and at the Devils Knob Parking Overlook as he joined the BRP at Reeds Gap and walked north on that highway, if he had been looking for or intending to locate and follow the AT.

Shaffer did not, however, rejoin the AT at Reeds Gap. Instead he turned north on the BRP at Reeds Gap, ignoring the AT to the east, similarly ignored that AT passing through the Three Ridges Parking Overlook, and continued to walk the BRP. By doing so, he skipped the 9½ miles of the AT from Reeds Gap to the Humpback Rocks Parking area. That section of the AT included the summit of Humpback Mt. and the well-known viewpoint of "The Rocks."

The AT and BRP next came into close contact in the Humpback Rocks area. After descending from "The Rocks," the AT went through a BRP parking area adjacent to the BRP at Koiners Deadening in the Humpback Rocks area, then followed an old road that skirted "the east side of the Parkway" before veering away from the BRP to the east.

Shaffer makes no mention of encountering, or looking for, the AT at the Humpbacks Rock Parking Area, even though it was a prominent feature in that area in 1948. The AT was at that point following a very distinct old road (the historic, and by then abandoned, Howardsville Turnpike) that ran parallel to the BRP. Shaffer makes no mention of the AT's very prominent and visible existence in the Humpback Rocks area in his narratives of the 18th.

Instead, Shaffer continued to Rockfish Gap on the BRP, again ignoring the AT. In doing so, he passed the AT crossing of the BRP about 1½ miles from Humpback Rocks, where the 1948 AT, still following the old Howardsville Turnpike, crossed the BRP, then turned to parallel it into Rockfish Gap on VSR 609.<sup>36</sup> If Shaffer noticed the AT crossing, he made no mention of that intersection.

If Shaffer had made a diligent attempt to relocate the AT, he could have done so by traveling FS 306 to intercept the relocated AT at a point 1.43 miles south of Reeds Gap. If he had made any attempt to relocate the AT at Reeds Gap based on his road map showing the AT running just east of the BRP, he could have easily done so with no more effort than a short walk east from the BRP on VSR 664. And within ½ mile on the BRP after leaving Reeds Gap, Shaffer ignored the AT very obviously passing through the BRP Three Ridges Parking Overlook. He further ignored the AT in the Humpback Rocks area as well as the AT crossing of the BRP at the Howardsville Turnpike crossing.

Shaffer did not therefore follow any part of the 17.43 miles of the AT from the old AT/new AT intersection near the current site of the Maupin Field Shelter to Rockfish Gap on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Instead, he walked VSR 814, VSR 664, and the BRP from Love to Rockfish Gap, with 13.7 miles on the BRP between Reeds Gap and Rockfish Gap.

From the accounts in LBN, SR48 and WWS, it therefore appears that Shaffer made no effort to relocate and travel the AT once he reached Love, and the BRP on May 18<sup>th</sup>. In fact, Shaffer, after describing how the AT disappeared on the 17<sup>th</sup>, never mentioned the AT again in any of his narratives until he followed it north out of Rockfish Gap on the 19<sup>th</sup>. His navigational focus after losing the AT on the 17<sup>th</sup> was apparently to find Love and travel from there on the BRP to Rockfish Gap. That focus on the BRP, rather than the AT, was the same as had been seen in southern Virginia in early May and in the Peaks of Otter area on May 14<sup>th</sup>. In all three cases, his apparent goal was to find the BRP and walk that highway whenever possible.

After camping at Rockfish Gap the night of May 18<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer prepared to go into Waynesboro on May 19<sup>th</sup> for supplies and mail. As he did, another point of satisfaction was that he was going to receive, for apparently the first time, publicity about his AT hike. On May 18<sup>th</sup>, while Shaffer was walking the BRP, G. Y. Carpenter, an engineer with the BRP, had stopped and asked Shaffer if he wanted a ride.<sup>37</sup> Shaffer reported that upon his refusal of a ride, Carpenter asked “What’s the story?” Upon learning about Shaffer’s hike, Carpenter suggested that he stop in at the office of the editor of the *News-Virginian*, in Waynesboro, because Carpenter was sure that the editor (Ross Heresy) was “‘very keen’ about such things [as AT hiking] and surely would be happy to see [Shaffer]” (WWS at 67).

This would seem to be exactly what he had hoped to eventually happen of his AT hike. The possibility of having a newspaper interview with him about his thru-hike – apparently his first such interview – published must have been encouraging. After nearly about 1½ months of hiking, he was going to finally receive public recognition for his “Long Cruise.” He noted in LBN (at 70) that he “washed pants so would look presentable” at his interview.

Shaffer went into Waynesboro on the 19<sup>th</sup>. He resupplied and visited the post office to check for mail. After having visited several of his planned mail drops along the Trail but never receiving any mail, he found his first mail from home waiting at the post office there. He also found that Ross Heresy, the editor of the Waynesboro *News-Virginian*, had left a message at the post office for Shaffer to “come right over” to be interviewed (LBN at 70, WWS at 68).

Shaffer reported in WWS (at 68) that his reaction to the interview request was “Why not?”

In fact, however, Shaffer was potentially putting the record of his 1948 AT hike at risk by agreeing to that interview in Waynesboro. After all, as he arrived at Rockfish Gap the evening of the 18<sup>th</sup>, he had not had contact with the AT since the afternoon of the 17<sup>th</sup>, at a point 30 or more AT miles south of Rockfish Gap. He had walked from the Love area to Rockfish Gap without contact with the AT, thereby failing to walk 17.43 miles of the AT. He therefore knew nothing about the character or features along those missed miles of AT.

The editor of the local newspaper in Waynesboro might not be aware enough of the features of that missed section of AT to ask questions of Shaffer as to his observations and experiences along the AT. But if that editor happened to have hiked that section of the AT, even a few entirely friendly questions of Shaffer as to, for instance, what shape the old Howardsville Turnpike was in, or what Shaffer thought of the view from “The Rocks,” or how the AT was around Devil’s Knob, could have quickly exposed Shaffer’s ignorance of the AT route and led to more pointed questions about how exactly Shaffer had got to Rockfish Gap. If that editor had determined during that interview that, in fact, Shaffer actually walked state roads and the BRP from Love to Rockfish Gap while claiming to be hiking the AT, how would that look in print? Given Shaffer’s acceptance of motor vehicle rides that caused him to skip sections of the AT on May 4<sup>th</sup> and May 14<sup>th</sup>, what would Shaffer’s answer be if he was asked a direct question about whether he accepted such rides? If he told the truth and admitted taking those rides, how would that look in print. If the interview went wrong, Shaffer’s reputation as the purported first AT thru-hiker could suffer a serious set-back.

Shaffer could have therefore chosen a better location for that first interview -- perhaps a town that he had actually followed the AT to reach. But he nevertheless agreed to the interview.

He was interviewed, and the article appeared on the front page of the May 20, 1948, issue of the *News-Virginian*. Although authorship of the article was noted as “Staff Writer” and the published photograph as a “Staff Photo,” Shaffer reported that the interview was done by Ross Heresy, editor, and the photograph taken by Bill Alwood.

It was, as one might expect, a friendly interview. Shaffer even described Heresy as acting “something like a kid on a picnic,” thereby suggesting Heresy was very supportive of Shaffer’s hike.

The interview apparently went well. But at some point, the interviewer casually changed the subject and asked Shaffer what he “planned on doing when he finished his trip.” Shaffer replied by “pulling out a little black notebook and said, ‘I’d like to write something about it, a book, maybe.’”

There was the notebook - - LBN - - in view of the interviewer. In it was, assuming Shaffer had written the narrative of his travels on the day before, a record of Shaffer not following the AT on May 18<sup>th</sup>, but instead state roads and the BRP from Love to Rockfish Gap. The interviewer was friendly, but nevertheless a reporter, with reporter instincts. Seeing the notebook, the interviewer asked Shaffer, directly, “what he had written down for yesterday[?]” Shaffer’s reply was described as follows:

. . . and he said, “nothing much, let’s see.” Then he mumbled something about killing a rattlesnake near Humpback and ended up by saying: – “Passed through Love, Virginia today and didn’t feel a thing.”

The logical follow-up question, as the interviewer saw Shaffer apparently referring to what was written in the notebook, would have been, “Can I take a look at the notebook?” What did the daily journal of a thru-hiker look like? Would there be quotable entries? But such a follow-up would have resulted in either Shaffer refusing the request, which would have undoubtedly raised questions about his candor, or a newspaper editor in Waynesboro, Virginia, reading what Shaffer had actually written in LBN for May 18<sup>th</sup> and realizing that he had not been on the AT, had not in fact reported in LBN that he had killed a rattlesnake at Humpback, and had therefore not given a candid answer to the question of what he had written in LBN for May 18<sup>th</sup>.<sup>38</sup>

The tone of the article suggests Shaffer’s discomfort at being asked about what was written in the notebook. But the matter of the notebook was apparently not pursued by the interviewer - - after all, it was a friendly, feature interview, not a “hard news” story.

After his *News-Virginian* interview, Shaffer was transported back to Rockfish Gap by photographer Bill Alwood (WWS at 68). Alwood took photographs of Shaffer there, one of which was published with the article. That photograph featured a smiling Earl Shaffer carrying his backpack, looking back at the camera and waving, as he walked along a highway past a “Entering Shenandoah National Park” sign, with a “Skyline Drive” sign hanging beneath that sign. That same sign appears to be the subject of a Shaffer slide (WWS Index No. 235). The caption on the photograph in the *News-Virginian* read as follows:

**FROM GEORGIA TO MAINE – BY FOOT** is the goal of Earl Shaffer, of York, Pa., who passed through here yesterday. He believes he is the first one to attempt the 2050 mile long hike on foot, thinks he will arrive about August 1. Shaffer is shown waving goodbye to News-Virginian camera at the entrance to the Shenandoah National Park, on the Skyline Drive. (Staff Photo)

It has to be assumed that Shaffer was involved in selection of the location for that photograph. Given that assumption, it is an odd choice to illustrate a hike on the AT since Shaffer is walking a highway – the Skyline Drive – in the photograph. Given the immediate availability of the AT in a more natural, trail-like setting, it is remarkable that Shaffer would choose (or agree) to pose in a highway setting.

Was Shaffer on the AT when photographed walking past that Skyline Drive sign on May 19<sup>th</sup>? The answer is, apparently not.

Perhaps the most obvious indication that Shaffer was not on the AT as he passed the sign is the lack of an AT blaze on the wooden post supporting the sign. Given the scarcity of suitable locations for AT blazes along a highway like the Skyline Drive, with no utility poles or fence posts to blaze, there would have very likely been an AT blaze on the wooden post of that sign if the AT was following the Skyline Drive at that point.

Review of 1948 AT data also indicates that Shaffer was likely not on the AT when that photograph was taken, but instead was on the Skyline Drive north of the point at which the AT turned off the Skyline Drive. The only contact the 1948 AT had with the BRP/Skyline Drive at Rockfish Gap was to join that highway just long enough – approximately 100 yds. – to cross U.S. 250 on the BRP/Skyline Drive. The 1950 Guide (at 14-301)<sup>39</sup> notes that the AT (north) turned right off the Skyline Drive “50 ft. beyond overpass over U.S. Route 250” to ascend a “grassy wood road”<sup>40</sup> to pass an observation tower at 0.1 miles<sup>41</sup> and reach the crest of the ridge at 0.35 miles. With the AT turning off the Skyline Drive within 50' of the U.S. 250 overpass, it is unlikely that it followed the Skyline Drive far enough to pass the sign pictured in the *News-Virginian* photograph.<sup>42</sup>

The record therefore appears to establish that when that photograph of Shaffer was taken, he was not on the AT, but instead was entering the Shenandoah National Park on the Skyline Drive, north of the point at which the AT turned off that highway. That suggests that Shaffer left Rockfish Gap not on the AT, but instead following the Skyline Drive.

Shaffer reported in all his narratives following the AT north from Rockfish Gap (LBN at 70, WWS at 69, SR48). If so, he would have likely had to backtrack on the Skyline Drive from the entrance sign to locate the AT where it turned off that highway, since the *News-Virginian* shows him walking north on the Skyline Drive, toward McCormick Gap. There is nothing in his narratives or photographic record to indicate that he traveled the 3.21 miles of the AT from Rockfish Gap to McCormick Gap, where the AT crossed the Skyline Drive. With the features of that AT section including the observation tower at Rockfish Gap and the open summit of Scott Mt., as both were noted in the 1050 Guide, one would think that some mention would be made, or there would have been a photograph taken, by Shaffer if he traveled that section of the AT.

Whether Shaffer skipped the Rockfish Gap - McCormick Gap section of the AT or not, his photographic record skips over that section. As discussed, his photograph of the entrance sign (WWS Index No. 235) places him on the Skyline Drive beyond the AT turn-off. His next photograph appears to be a view of Waynesboro, apparently from Bear Den Mt. just north of McCormick Gap (WWS Index No. 234). Those two photographs would therefore be consistent with Shaffer having followed the Skyline Drive, and not the AT, from Rockfish Gap to McCormick Gap.

Shaffer may well have followed the AT from Rockfish Gap to McCormick Gap, as he claimed to have done, and just passed the observation tower and the summit of Scott Mt. without noting, or taking a photograph from, either feature of that section of the AT. Or he may have chosen to walk the Skyline Drive to McCormick Gap instead of following the AT because that highway was faster and more convenient than the Trail. Since that section of the AT is north of Rockfish Gap and therefore beyond the scope of this Report's review of Shaffer's 1948 hike, it is not necessary to make that determination in this Report.

What has been determined by the review of Shaffer's hike in this Report is, however, that Shaffer arrived at Rockfish Gap on May 18<sup>th</sup> traveling the BRP, not the AT. What has also been determined is that as of late morning on the 19<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer had not had any contact with the AT<sup>43</sup> since sometime in the afternoon of the 17<sup>th</sup>. And what is known from the May 20, 1948, issue of the

Waynesboro *News-Virginian* is that when photographed for that newspaper on May 19<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer was smilingly waving as he walked north from Rockfish Gap on the Skyline Drive, rather than the AT. From that record, therefore, it appears that Shaffer left Rockfish Gap on May 19, 1948, the same way he had arrived on May 18<sup>th</sup> – walking a scenic highway instead of the AT.

## CHAPTER 14 POST-HIKE: AUGUST 1948 - JANUARY 1949

The published record of Shaffer's 1948 AT hike ends on August 5, 1948, with his arrival at Mt. Katahdin. But its place in the history of the AT was not yet certain. The fact that Shaffer's 1948 hike is now accepted as the first recorded thru-hike of the AT does not mean that there was never any question as to whether it would be accepted as such by the ATC and the AT community. Looking at Shaffer's hike not from the modern perspective of Shaffer and his 1948 hike being accepted features of AT history, but rather from the perspective of August 1948 before any such acceptance, Shaffer actually confronted a potentially difficult task in gaining acceptance of his hike from the ATC.

By the calculations thus far presented in this Report of the AT miles not hiked by Shaffer in the course of his 1948 hike, he had failed to hike 165.58 miles of the AT by the time he reached Rockfish Gap on May 18, 1948. By the time Shaffer reached Rockfish Gap, he was remarkably casual about skipping sections of the AT. As previously discussed, Shaffer traveled state roads and the BRP on May 18<sup>th</sup> without mention of or apparent concern as to the location of the AT. His cavalier attitude about the May 18<sup>th</sup> "skip" seemed to culminate a process within Shaffer through the month of May 1948 of increasing acceptance, from his point of view, of travel on the BRP (and now the Skyline Drive<sup>1</sup>) as the equivalent of travel on the AT. His casual attitude seemingly therefore arose out of his apparent belief that walking the BRP, or the Skyline Drive, was the equivalent of hiking the AT.

That "equivalent hike" attitude was clearly stated in the justifications Shaffer offered for his acceptance of the motor vehicle ride from Fries to Galax on May 4<sup>th</sup>. In his mind, he had walked enough to even it all out, so he was justified in motoring ahead to Galax. And it was that same attitude that led to what appears at first reading to be the remarkable situation of Shaffer repeatedly presenting himself as an AT thru-hiker in conversations with numerous individuals even while engaged in skipping substantial sections of the AT by walking (or being driven on) highways that had no association with the AT.

Convincing himself that he was entirely justified to claim to be an AT thru-hiker while often not actually hiking the AT (or even while not hiking at all, but riding in a motor vehicle) would not, however, necessarily mean that the AT community, or the public, would agree. That potential tension between the degree of non-AT travel that Shaffer considered justified in his own AT thru-hike<sup>2</sup> and what the AT community, or the public, would accept, was seen in Shaffer's apparently flustered reaction on May 19<sup>th</sup> during his *News-Virginian* interview to being asked to read what he had written in LBN about his May 18<sup>th</sup> travel. Shaffer had apparently displayed LBN during the interview only to illustrate his intention to write a book about his AT thru-hike. When suddenly confronted with a request that he read the LBN account of his May 18<sup>th</sup> travel, Shaffer was not prepared to have his non-AT course of travel (and, by implication, what he found to be acceptable as an AT thru-hike) subjected to review by *News-Virginian* Editor Ross Hersey.

As previously discussed, research for this Report has not found any indication that Shaffer permitted distribution of LBN. Instead of submitting LBN to the ATC as documentation of his 1948 AT thru-hike, he instead prepared SR48 specially for that purpose. While WWS makes frequent reference to LBN, there has apparently been no publication of the actual text of LBN.<sup>3</sup> Although, then, Shaffer may have made LBN available for review to others, it may be as well that LBN was held as a private document by Shaffer and therefore only became available for public review with its donation to the NMAH after his death. If so, the *News-Virginian* interview on May 19, 1948, was

a dramatic moment in the history of Shaffer's AT hike as LBN, with its record of Shaffer's non-AT travel, may have come as close to media, and therefore public, review with Editor Hersey's casual inquiry as it ever would again for more than a half-century.

ATC scrutiny of Shaffer's hike could have therefore been a difficult matter for him. He had, as previously discussed, failed to follow the AT on a number of occasions and accepted motor vehicle rides skipping parts of the AT on two occasions. Such a record, if known, would probably not meet the standards of the ATC, or the AT community, for recognition of the first AT thru-hike. Purported AT thru-hikers actually "short-cutting" entire sections of the AT, following the BRP instead of the AT, or hitching rides around sections of the AT were probably viewed no more favorably in 1948 than such activities in the modern era.

Acceptance of his hike by the ATC as the first recorded thru-hike was therefore certainly not a foregone conclusion. ATC officials were, Shaffer reported, "skeptical at first (WWS at 1). He described in WWS (at 1) the "cross-examination" he underwent by Jean Stephenson as to his claimed hike. He then explained that he satisfied the ATC by submitting a "day-to-day report, showed hundreds of color slides, and talked for hours about various parts of the AT, the trip was accepted as fact."

That "day-to-day report" submitted to the ATC by Shaffer was not LBN. Instead, he prepared and submitted a November 1948 report ("SR48").

As previously discussed, SR48 is not a contemporaneous record (a daily journal) kept by Shaffer during his 1948 hike. The only apparent contemporaneous record is the LBN. No indication has been found in the record that LBN was submitted to the ATC for review.<sup>4</sup> Why, then, did Shaffer specially write SR48 for submission to the ATC instead of just presenting LBN for review, either in its original handwritten form or by the simple expedient of typing a copy for circulation?

What is known is that Shaffer apparently decided to not make the full text of LBN available to the ATC, but chose instead to specially prepare and present to the ATC the brief day-to-day description of his hike found in SR48. Shaffer's reasons for apparently withholding the full text of LBN and substituting instead SR48 can be inferred from the comparative readings of pertinent portions of both documents as has been cited in the several navigational case studies presented in this report.

SR48 was therefore apparently written by Shaffer as a substitute for providing the LBN to the ATC. He wrote it under circumstances that would cause him to be highly motivated to write it so as to present the hike in the most favorable light possible to the ATC. Its writing would have tended therefore to emphasize Shaffer's on-AT travel, de-emphasize his off-AT travel, and present potentially embarrassing situations as to his following the AT with ambiguity, if at all.

Shaffer, apparently anticipating questions as to his off-AT travel, adopting the proactive strategy of admitting in his SR48 memorandum that he had not actually hiked that AT to some undefined degree in stating:

I am sorry that I cannot present to the Appalachian Trail Conference a record of a trip exactly planned and perfectly executed. I strayed at times and in getting back failed to cover every bit of the Trail route. Occasionally, as in the White Mountains, the A.T. was not specified on signs and I followed the wrong loop.

Shaffer's SR48 memorandum assigned, however, the responsibility for such failures to follow the AT not on himself, but rather on the following.

1. The weather, which he described as "troublesome with much cold rain," stressing that "Words fail to describe adequately some of the hardships undergone during prolonged rainstorms and alternating cold spells."
2. The virtual non-existence of the AT, in his stating that "Several times I found the Trail practically non-existent and was forced to bushwhack." He indicated that in planning his hike, he had "reckoning on" only "maintaining the approximate route" of the Trail since he anticipated that "some parts of the Trail were likely to be impassable or nearly so."
3. The failure of "the mail service" (i.e., the U.S. Post Office) to deliver a "quantity of literature in time and [he] was [therefore] forced to set out with nothing but road maps to go by," which resulted, according to Shaffer in "errors and straying from the Trail."

Shaffer's position in SR48 as to why his 1948 hike should be accepted as a thru-hike was therefore that any failure of his to follow the AT was a result of the above factors - - weather, a virtually non-existent AT impossible to follow in places, and his failure to have trail guides to use during his hike through the fault of the mail service - - and therefore not his responsibility. His basic contention was, since he was not responsible for the non-AT travel he had done, was expressed by him as follows:

However, I did maintain the approximate route and covered more distance than a precise trip requires.

Shaffer therefore contended in SR48 that his non-AT travel on his 1948 hike was, in effect, the fault of the weather, or the AT itself for being virtually non-existent and impossible to follow, or the U.S. Post Office, or whoever - - but not him. If he strayed from the AT, it was unavoidable and therefore not his fault. With responsibility for his non-AT travel assigned elsewhere, he therefore contended that his 1948 AT hike should be accepted because he had hiked some "equivalent" route along the "approximate" route of the AT.

In WWS (at 62), Shaffer asserts that his "hit or miss passage along the approximate route" of the AT through southern Virginia was a result of the "confusion" he "encountered" from the fact that the decision had already been made to relocate that section of the AT. By that, Shaffer appears to be suggesting that his failure to follow the AT through that area was the result of the anticipated abandonment. As previously discussed, the record establishes that AT marking was being actively maintained, with a new trail guide being published in 1950. Having focused his travel through that area on state highways (Va. 97) and the BRP, with little regard to finding or following the AT, Shaffer could not have known much about AT conditions because he traveled so little of it. Such a comment in WWS suggests an awareness on the part of Shaffer that his non-AT travel, if discovered, might not be deemed acceptable for a claimed thru-hike, and his attempt to preempt such scrutiny by suggesting, falsely, that the AT was "non-existent" in southern Virginia in 1948.

The only one of those justifications offered by Shaffer for his off-AT travel not previously addressed is the weather factor. On that remaining matter of the weather, Shaffer's reports of just how terrible the weather was on his 1948 hike are pervasive in his writings. One cannot help but feel sympathy for a hiker confronted with weather so bad that "Words fail to describe adequately some

of the hardships undergone during prolonged rainstorms and alternating cold spells” (SR48).

Shaffer may have suffered unusually inclement weather on the AT north of Rockfish Gap. But, in fact, the weather as he reported it in his daily entries of SR48<sup>5</sup> don't support such a description of the weather south of that point. During the period April 4 - May 18, 1948, Shaffer mentioned the word “rain” in his entries in SR48 on April 4-6, April 11, April 13-14, April 29, May 4, May 6, May 12 and May 18 - - or 12 days out of the 46 days in that period. He only mentioned the word “rain” during two periods of more than one day (April 4-6 and April 13-14). On the other hand, Shaffer failed to mention the word rain in SR48 entries during the April 7-10 period (4 days), the April 15-28 period (14 days), the April 30- May 3 period (4 days), the May 7-11 period (5 days), and the May 13-17 period (5 days).

According to SR48, Shaffer experienced no rain worth mentioning from the Nantahala Gorge, on April 15<sup>th</sup>, to Hampton, Tn., on April 28<sup>th</sup> – two full weeks. He experienced one period of rain (May 12<sup>th</sup> and into the 13<sup>th</sup>) worth mentioning in SR48 from the time he left Rocky Knob Park on May 7<sup>th</sup> until he reached Love, on the BRP south of Humpback Rocks, on May 17<sup>th</sup>.

While Shaffer may have considered such a weather pattern extraordinarily adverse, most persons who have hiked the AT through the southern Appalachians would not likely agree. Shaffer might have struggled through unusually heavy rains somewhere on his 1948 AT trip, but he did not apparently do so south of Rockfish Gap or before May 19, 1948. He had only two periods of multi-day rain (April 4-6 and April 11-14, with no rain reported on April 12). What he did not experience in the south was the multi-day, high elevation, cold rains that many AT hikers experience through the high-altitude GSMNP and Pisgah National Forest sections of the AT. He had no rain reported in SR48 through that entire region.

Shaffer's reports of unusually cold weather are also not supported by the more limited temperature data available. He certainly experienced several nights of below or near-freezing temperatures, but that is to be expected in the high elevations he was traveling.

Shaffer's reports of suffering through repeated heavy rains and cold temperatures do not, therefore, reflect the reality of the weather he actually experienced south of Rockfish Gap. His reports of such weather were therefore either exaggeration for the purpose of excusing his repeated failures to follow the AT, or his sincere impression that it rained a lot, and that it was very cold, because of how woefully ill-equipped he was on that hike. With no tent, only a single poncho for rain protection, and only a single blanket for night warmth, Shaffer undoubtedly suffered hardships. That lack of equipment could not, however, justify Shaffer's not following the AT because his lack of equipment (like his lack of AT guides) was a product of his planning and preferences for that hike. Like his decision to not procure AT Guides during his hike, it was his decision to not seek better equipment while on his hike.<sup>6</sup> If he then made poor navigation decisions because he was cold or wet, it was not the fault of some unusual weather pattern. It was entirely Shaffer's responsibility, perhaps struggling because of his lack of adequate rain and cold weather gear.

Even with the explanations and justifications offered the ATC by Shaffer in SR48 in apparent anticipation of skeptical questions about his extensive (at least in the south) off-AT travel, Shaffer would have likely had a difficult time overcoming focused questions about his record of skipping AT sections. As previously noted, he had failed to hike a calculated 142.38 miles (47.3%) of the total 1948 AT distance of 300.39 miles (1950 Guide) from Byllesby to Rockfish Gap in Virginia, with his traveling in a motor vehicle on two occasions (May 4<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>) in the process of skipping sections of the AT. And, as previously calculated, as of May 19, 1948, the calculated total of AT mileage not hiked by Shaffer on April 4 - May 19, 1948 was 165.58 miles, or 21.2 %, of the 781.01 total miles of the AT south of Rockfish Gap.

Given the extent of Shaffer's failure to hike various sections of the AT, his claim to have thru-hiked the AT in 1948 may well have not survived any detailed scrutiny. Questions as basic as ones about Swim Bald, Dixons Ferry, Fisher Peak, or Humpback Rocks would have revealed his lack of familiarity with the AT. In fact, such questioning could well have disclosed that through much of Virginia, Shaffer was much more familiar with the BRP than he was the AT.

Whatever Shaffer's conversations may have been as to his AT hike, SR48 put it in writing. That report could have been subject to a detailed review by persons familiar with the various sections of AT that Shaffer had purportedly hiked. Unlike this Report, prepared more than 60 years after the fact, such an examination of Shaffer's hike against the route and features of the 1948 AT required no research in 1948. It was contemporary. The state of maintenance was known. So if he was questioned skeptically, his failure to follow the AT (and his following the BRP so much) was going to come out as he would be unable to describe any features of those AT miles skipped. And it would have been hard to have all that non-AT travel, including the very substantial travel on the BRP, excused or justified on the basis of bad weather, or a non-existent AT, or the failure of the Post Office to deliver ATC literature to Shaffer.

Such a review may well have resulted in questions that Shaffer could not satisfactorily answer, and rejection of his 1948 hike as a thru-hike on the basis of his excessive non-AT travel as well as use of motor vehicles to skip AT sections.

From a reading of SR48 that puts aside the knowledge that his 1948 hike was accepted by the ATC as a thru-hike, there seems to be a defensiveness about Shaffer's explanations and justifications that suggest he may well have been concerned about the effect on his claim to have hiked the AT of such a detailed "cross-examination" of SR48.

But, surprisingly, neither SR48, nor Shaffer's claimed thru-hike, apparently underwent any detailed, or skeptical, review by the ATC. While Shaffer indicates (in WWS at 2-3) that he "... submitted a day-to-day report, showed hundreds of color slides, and talked for hours about various parts of the trail. . . " before his hike was accepted by the ATC, a November 23, 1948, memorandum of ATC Chairman Myron H. Avery, which presented SR48<sup>7</sup> to the ATC Board, describes a remarkably different process of acceptance of Shaffer's hike as a thru-hike by the ATC after submission by Shaffer of the SR48.

In Memorandum No. 3, dated November 23, 1948, Avery introduces the report of Shaffer referred to herein as SR48 and provides two copies to each Board member. Since receipt of that report by the ATC was acknowledged by a letter to him by Marion Park, Secretary of the ATC, also dated November 23, 1948, it appears that Shaffer's report to the ATC had not been seen by Board members prior to receipt of Memorandum No. 3.

From Shaffer's account in WWS, one would expect that he "showed hundreds of color slides, and talked for hours about various parts of the trail" after he submitted that "day-to-day report." From that statement, one would picture Shaffer meeting with interested ATC officials (including Stephenson) after submission of his report, showing slides, and answering questions about his report.

Memorandum No. 3, however, indicates that submission of Shaffer's report was not followed by any such slide presentations or conversations. In preparation of this report, there has been found no record of Shaffer making any such slide or verbal presentation to the ATC Board.

So no such presentation was apparently made. And there were, apparently, no questions. To the contrary, Avery's Memorandum No. 3 directly discouraged any questions as to Shaffer's report.

The fourth paragraph of that memorandum, which is most pertinent to that point, is quoted in its entirety below:

Mr. Shaffer's most helpful report invites and stimulates endless discussion. There is probably at least one phase of the matter which each of us would like to write to Mr. Shaffer about. I think that in this connection we should bear in mind that he has already spent considerable time in preparing this most detailed day-to-day record and in preparing the item for Appalachian Trailway News. Therefore, I feel that the circulation of this report should not result in increasing Mr. Shaffer correspondence labors. I am told that he is at work on articles for publication which will enable him to recoup the time spent on this project and to utilize the experience and reputation gained thereby. Compliance with requests for articles, relating to experiences on this journey or dealing with individual sections, would serve to diminish Mr. Shaffer's ability to make use of his material. Since I have circulated this report for action within the Conference, I have thought it very advisable to refer to this situation with the suggestion that Mr. Shaffer's evidenced cooperation should not serve to stimulate further requests of him.

That paragraph speaks for itself, and requires no summary. There was not to be any such slide presentations or conversations as Shaffer described in WWS before his hike was accepted. Chairman Avery suggested that there were to be, in effect, no questions.

A letter written to Shaffer by Avery during the same period in which Memorandum No. 3 was being prepared offers further insight into the situation under which Shaffer's hike was accepted by the ATC. On November 27, 1948, Avery wrote Shaffer a letter<sup>8</sup> in regards to the 1948 Shaffer Report and Shaffer's 1948 hike. With that letter he provided Shaffer a copy of Memorandum No. 3.<sup>9</sup>

In that letter, he expressed "the appreciation of the Appalachian Trail Conference. . . " for that "most detailed day-to-day record." He also offered his congratulations on the ATN article Shaffer had submitted, describing it as "just the sort of summary and resume of impressions which make a most valuable item for a magazine such as Appalachian Trailway News."

Avery then discussed in that letter Shaffer's failure to use guidebooks and what he believed to have been the effect on Shaffer's hike of that lack of guidebooks. He noted that the use of guidebooks would have ". . . would have robbed your trip of an element of pioneering and adventure . . ." But he noted that if Shaffer had received guidebook data from the ATC, ". . . it would have made it [Shaffer's hike], I think, of more value to you and to the Conference." Avery concluded his thoughts on Shaffer's preference to not use a guidebook, and the effect on Shaffer's hike use of a guidebook would have had, by noting that Shaffer's hike ". . . would have been entirely different . . . if through the availability of the guidebook data you had journeyed continuously over The Appalachian Trail."

Shaffer's failure to hike two particular sections of the AT – the Fontana Dam relocation on April 17<sup>th</sup> and the Bearwallow Gap - Apple Orchard Mt. section on May 14<sup>th</sup> – were specifically recognized and addressed by ATC Chairman Avery in both his November 23, 1948, Memo No. 3 to the ATC Board and his November 27, 1948, letter to Shaffer.<sup>10</sup> In both, Avery noted Shaffer's failure to hike those relocated section of AT, but assigned responsibility for those failures to Shaffer not knowing about the relocated AT because of the lack of availability of guidebooks. Avery therefore

apparently excused Shaffer's failure to hike those sections of the AT on the basis of his belief that Shaffer did not know about the relocated AT. As discussed previously, a review of the entire record appears to establish that Shaffer did know about the relocated AT in both cases and decided in each case to not follow the AT. Contrary to Avery's impression, therefore, it was not Shaffer's lack of guidebooks, but rather Shaffer's decisions, that caused his failure to follow the AT in both of those cases.

When read together, the contemporaneous writing of Chairman Avery in Memorandum No. 3 and in his November 27, 1948, letter to Shaffer displays the remarkable juxtaposition of, on the one hand, his strong suggestion to the Board in Memorandum No. 3 that there be no inquiry of Shaffer as to his report to the ATC before its "action" on Shaffer's claimed thru-hike while, on the other hand, stating to Shaffer in the November 27 letter that if Shaffer had used guidebooks, his hike

. . . would have been entirely different . . . if through the availability of the guidebook data you had journeyed continuously over The Appalachian Trail."

It appears, therefore, that by Memorandum No. 3 ATC Chairman Avery encouraged the ATC Board to accept Shaffer's 1948 hike as the first thru-hike without question of or inquiry into the written report Shaffer had submitted to the ATC even while recognizing in a contemporaneous letter to Shaffer that Shaffer had not, in fact, "journeyed continuously over The Appalachian Trail."

For whatever reason, ATC Chairman Avery seemed determined to have Shaffer's 1948 hike accepted as the first thru-hike even though he recognized that Shaffer had not "journeyed continuously over The Appalachian Trail" in the course of that hike. Memorandum No. 3 cannot be reasonably read as having any meaning other than that Chairman Avery wanted no questions or inquiries of Shaffer before action by the ATC in accepting that hike regardless of any recognized or suspected deficiency of that hike as an actual continuous thru-hike of the AT.

It therefore appears that the driving force behind Shaffer's acceptance as the first thru-hiker was not the strength of the record he presented to the ATC, but rather the apparent determination of Chairman Avery that Shaffer's hike would be accepted as the first thru-hike. The officers and Board of the ATC apparently followed the Chairman's "suggestion" and accepted Shaffer as the first thru-hiker, without further scrutiny of his hike. And while apparently determined to avoid any real scrutiny of Shaffer's 1948 report to the ATC and to have Shaffer recognized as the first thru-hiker, Avery nevertheless caused Shaffer's report, and Avery's own candid comments as to Shaffer's hike, to be prominent in the records of the ATC by his Memorandum No. 3 and his November 27, 1948, letter to Shaffer.

For whatever reason, Shaffer appeared uneasy about such a wide distribution of that report. In a January 9, 1949, letter to Jean Stephenson,<sup>11</sup> Shaffer said:

Don't know why it should have been but it was a shock to me to learn that my report went out to practically everybody connected with the Appalachian Trail Conference. It was kept to a minimum so as to avoid usurping too much space in the files and makes rather threadbare reading.

Shaffer's 1948 hike was, therefore, accepted by the ATC as the first recorded thru-hike of the AT.

But to Shaffer's apparent discomfort, his report to the ATC (SR48) was made part of the

records of the ATC. Although SR48 was not scrutinized in 1948, it would continue to exist. Even thereafter likely lingering in the ATC files<sup>12</sup> as a document with no apparent relevancy to the modern AT, it gained renewed relevancy with public access to the Shaffer papers at the NMAH after Shaffer's death in 2002. With the addition of public access to LBN, a modern researcher has a historic "snapshot" of Shaffer's writings as to his 1948 hike both during the course of the hike (in LBN) as well as how he presented it to the ATC in the November 1948 SR48.

This first post-hike period addressed in this report ends with the publishing of Shaffer's article, entitled "The Long Cruise," about his 1948 AT hike in the January 1949 *Appalachian Trailway News* (ATN), a publication of the ATC. Portions of that article have been previously quoted, but its selection as the end point for the first post-hike period is based on that article being, apparently, Shaffer's first public writing describing that hike.

Its writing closes 1948 for Shaffer, and for all Shaffer's writings of that year, up to publication of his article in the January 1949 ATN, about his 1948 AT hike.

At the end of Chapter 6, the reconstruction of Shaffer's travels on April 3-4, 1948, was suspended, pending the introduction of post-hike events and documents. Those post-hike events and documents are now of record in Shaffer's 1948 hike.

What is relevant to a continued inquiry into Shaffer's travels on April 3-4, 1948, is that what is common to all those 1948 writings, as found and reviewed for this report, is the absence of any reference or description of the distinctive appearance and features of the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3-4, 1948.

On April 3-4, 1948, the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe featured a 38' high marble monument, erected in 1930 in honor of James Oglethorpe, the founder of Georgia. It featured a prominent AT southern terminus sign that included the official mileage of the AT in 1948 - - 2,050 miles. And it featured, to the south, a remarkable view, described in the 1950 Guide as follows.

At Mt. Oglethorpe one realizes that he has reached the end or is at the beginning of the Trail. Below, to the south, for 180 degrees, is an unbroken level expanse of fertile farming land. Hardly a significant hill rises from the plain. The mountain range has come to an end. This impression of an abrupt and complete termination of the 2,021-mile Trail system is in curious contrast to the northern terminus at Katahdin, which appears as an isolated mountain only from the south, while at its northern end two ranges reach out toward the Penobscot East Branch Valley.

Like the summits on the AT along the Blue Ridge escarpment of Virginia (Fisher Peak and Rocky Knob) the view across the far-below lowlands is far-ranging, with nothing but the curve of the earth to visually restrict the view.

As discussed earlier, Shaffer's descriptions in LBN and SR48 of what he called "Mt. Oglethorpe" make no mention in either as to the marble monument, the unique AT sign, or the impressive view that characterized the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe. In fact, neither LBN nor SR48 mention anything of notable interest on the summit of the mountain that Shaffer identified as Mt. Oglethorpe, other than its apparent nearness to a cabin by an old fire tower.

At this point of the inquiry into Shaffer's actual course of travel on April 3-4, 1948, it is sufficient to note that as of the publication of Shaffer's article in the January 1949 ATN there has

been no writing of Shaffer found in which he indicates any knowledge of the existence of the monument or the AT sign on, or the view from, the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe.

In WWS, however, Shaffer begins Chapter 1 (at 7) with the kind of description of Mt. Oglethorpe that might be expected of a hiker starting an AT journey on that summit. He describes the summit at sunrise, with the “battered and weatherbeaten” AT sign, the “tall white shaft” of the Oglethorpe Monument, and the views to the south extending to Stone Mt., near Atlanta. WWS features (at 7) a vivid description of the AT sign on that summit, and a printed representation (but not a photograph) of the sign itself. Also featured in WWS (at 10) is a photograph of the Oglethorpe Monument. The Shaffer record also includes a photograph of the AT southern terminus sign (WWS Index 004 , DVD Slide Show No. 3) and two photographs identified as being taken from the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe (WWS Index Nos. 006 and 008).

While neither of Shafer’s 1948 narratives (LBN or SR48) makes any mention of the monument, the sign and the views, WWS describes and highlights those summit features while 4 photographs in the Shaffer record feature views of or from that summit. In order to address the contrast between Shaffer’s 1948 writings and the full record as developed by the time of publication of WWS in the 1980’s, it is necessary to continue the review of Shaffer’s activities in regards to his 1948 hike into 1949 and 1950.

A review of the record of Shaffer’s 1948 AT hike is not, therefore, complete with the record as it existed at the conclusion of that hike in August 1948, or even at the point after submission of SR48 when it was accepted as a thru-hike by the ATC, or in January 1949 with publication of “The Long Cruise” in ATN. It is now therefore necessary to move this Report forward, to the period of 1949 and 1950 in order to examine writings, photographs and travels of Shaffer that are relevant to a full understanding of the Shaffer record of that 1948 hike as well as the relationship of that hike to the southern terminus of the AT at the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe, Georgia.

## CHAPTER 15 POST - HIKE: 1949 - 1950

This chapter continues the review of Shaffer's writings and actions related to his 1948 AT hike through 1949 and 1950.

After publication of the Shaffer article in the January 1949 ATN, it is not certain what writing Shaffer may have done concerning his 1948 AT hike through August 1949. There is, however, in the NMAH record what appears to be an early, undated, draft of WWS<sup>1</sup> (hereinafter DFT 1) that presents intrinsic evidence of its writing began in late 1948 or early 1949.

There is from the totality of Shaffer's writings about his 1948 hike a strong suggestion that his writing of WWS began very soon after completion of his hike in August 1948. That early commencement of the writing of WWS is inferred by the chronological sequence of the appearance of detailed narratives and anecdotes in that writing. When reads LBN with SR48, and then with DFT1, each successive writing is, in general, increasingly detailed as to the narrative and anecdotes. So each later writing, chronologically, includes events that do not appear in the earlier writings and recollections that are more detailed than what appears in those earlier writings.

It appears certain that Shaffer kept no contemporary record of his hike other than LBN. As previously discussed, he apparently did not save the road maps he used for navigation, suggesting that the face of the maps was not used for note-taking or other marks on the maps to memorialize events. So as to narratives and anecdotes that do not appear in LBN, but do appear in SR48, such writing must have been based on Shaffer's memory of his hike, as refreshed by entreties in LBN or his photographs. And as to narratives and anecdotes that appear in DFT1, and later in WWS, that do not appear in the earlier writings, such writing would also have to have been based on Shaffer's memories rather than the earlier, less detailed, writings.

It is speculative because of the lack of dating, but DFT 1 could well be the initial draft of WWS. There are, in NMAH Box 8, Folders 6 and 8, a number of what appears to be separately written inserts for the draft, with some identified as such. NMAH Box 8, Folder 3, consists of numerous notes that also appear to be potential inserts. From that, it appears that WWS, as published, was the product of a long process of rewriting and editing that began with a draft (perhaps DFT1) written soon enough after the 1948 hike to allow it to be written based on Shaffer's memories, rather than LBN of SR48.

What is particularly relevant in DFT 1 to the continuing inquiry as to Shaffer's travels on April 3-4, 1948, is that the original of the first page includes Shaffer's description of his departure from "Mt. Oglethorpe." That description, in pertinent part, reads as follows, with inserted lines indicated with *italics* and ~~strikeouts~~ indicated as such.

*The long trek began* One chilly morning in early April. I ~~stood alone~~  
on the windswept summit of Mt. Oglethorpe, southernmost peak in  
the Appalachian Mountains. . .

The launching *of the Long Cruise* was totally lacking in ceremony.  
~~The day was cold and~~ The only way to get warm was to move along.

(Note: in quoting documents that have struck-through or crossed out text in the original, such text is identified by a ~~strikeout~~. Words inserted by Shaffer into the original document are in *italics*.)

Words inserted in the writing of this Report to clarify the meaning of the original , or lower case letters substituted for capitalized letters in the original, are indicated by [brackets]).

What is notable is that, like LBN and SR48, there is no mention in DFT 1 of the Oglethorpe Monument, the AT sign, or the views from Mt. Oglethorpe. There is again no indication from the text of that draft found in NMAH Box 8, Folder 7, that the writer is describing Mt. Oglethorpe. There were, however, two separately written inserts found in Box 8, Folder 8, that are descriptions of Mt. Oglethorpe that do include descriptions of the monument, sign and views.

The introduction of the description of Mt. Oglethorpe by inserts implies that Shaffer became aware of those distinctive summit features at some later time. That is speculation, of course, but speculation based on the hard facts of the lack of photographic or textual support in the Shaffer record for Shaffer's presence on Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3-4, 1948. Shaffer's actions after August 1949 may add additional weight to a conclusion that Shaffer only became aware of the features of Mt. Oglethorpe at some point after completion of his hike in August 1948.

The source of that information may well have been an August 1949 magazine article. While Shaffer was on his 1948 AT hike, *National Geographic* magazine was finishing up an article on the Appalachian Trail, which was being written by Andrew H. Brown with photographs by Robert F. Sisson. Apparently hearing of Shaffer's hike, the article featured, on the first page of the article (at page 219), a description of the end of Shaffer's hike and a brief summary of the course of his journey. It identified him as the first thru-hiker of the Appalachian Trail.

The article, entitled "Skyline Trail From Maine To Georgia," was published in the August 1949 *National Geographic*. Shaffer would have, of course, obtained a copy (and a copy was found in the NMAH Shaffer collection). It may be that his satisfaction at seeing that very high-profile and favorable publicity for his hike was quickly tempered by what was featured elsewhere in that article. For on page 224 was a photograph of the AT southern terminus sign on Mt. Oglethorpe, and on page 236 was a vivid description of the Oglethorpe Monument, the view from that summit, and the AT sign (including recitation of the text of the sign).

What is therefore certainly true is that if Shaffer was not aware of the distinctive features of the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe before publication of that August 1949 *National Geographic* article, he would certainly be aware of what he should have seen on the mountain he thought was Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3 - 4, 1948, after he read that article.

What is also known is that Shaffer did, at some point, visit the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe after completion of his 1948 hike, and that he did take photographs of the summit that were included in the record of his 1948 hike as though he had taken them on his 1948 hike. There was, in fact, just such a trip made to Georgia, and the AT through the southern Appalachians, by Shaffer in June or July 1950. Shaffer reported on that trip in a July 17, 1950, letter to ATC Chairman Avery. Avery transmitted that letter to the ATC Board by Memorandum No. 10. Both discuss an automobile trip made by Shaffer through the southern AT region. Memorandum No. 10 more fully states the purpose of Shaffer's 1950 trip to the AT in the southern Appalachians as Avery apparently understood it, as follows:

Recently, Mr. Shaffer, in connection with magazine articles which he is preparing, returned to the southern end of the trail to obtain additional photographs and to see localities where weather conditions had precluded observations to the extent that he desired.

Shaffer traveled the entire length of the AT during that 1950 automobile trip, visiting

individual sections of the Trail in the process of that drive. In an August 12, 1950, letter to Avery,<sup>2</sup> Shaffer reported that

At the time of this writing I am on my way home after completing my fragmentary re-enactment of the Long Cruise.

Based on the text of Avery's Memorandum No.10 and Shaffer's July 17, 1950, letter to Avery, it is apparent that what Shaffer disclosed to Avery (and the ATC) was that the purpose of his 1950 return to the southern AT was to ". . . obtain additional photographs and to see localities where weather conditions had precluded observations to the extent that he desired." By that, the purpose of that trip was to return to areas on the AT that he had hiked in 1948 but while hiking during that hike was not able to take photographs. In fact, he listed those areas and described in his July 17, 1950, letter specific supplemental slides he had taken.

While Shaffer described in that letter to Avery his 1950 trip south and his supplemental photography as to the areas noted above, he did not discuss any travels to or photography in the Amicalola Falls - Mt. Oglethorpe area of the AT. But whether in the course of that trip or in another trip, there are photographs in the Shaffer collection, as well as documents, that suggest that Shaffer did visit that area at some point after completion of his 1948 hike and took photographs on that visit that were inserted into and made a part of what has been represented to be the photographic record of that 1948 hike.

This Report is not focused on Shaffer's photographic record. However, it has been noted in the course of research that the collection of photographs that are understood to have been, if not having been represented to have been, taken by Shaffer on his 1948 hike is not made up entirely of what appears to be 1948 AT hike photographs. Instead, it is a collection of slides that appear, when the actual slides are examined in the NMAH collection, to be 1948 Shaffer slides combined and intermingled with supplemental slides from a variety of sources and, in many cases, from apparent time frames after that 1948 hike.<sup>3</sup>

It would require a separate Report from an author with more than the strictly amateur standing of this author to address the issue of the Shaffer slide collection, but the impression received in preparation of this Report is that Shaffer started out with the slides he took of his 1948 hike, but then supplemented his slides with other slides he (or others) took in order to present a better photographic presentation of not just his particular hike, but of the Appalachian Trail. Whether intended or not, the impression given the public seemed to have been that all the photographs shown by Shaffer in his slide shows, or published in WWS, were taken by him on his 1948 hike. That does not appear to be the case, and in some areas that apparent supplementation constitutes a significant part of the Shaffer slides.<sup>4</sup>

Given that supplementation, it is often a complicated matter to sort out what slides are 1948 Shaffer slides, and what slides are not. It is particularly difficult to sort out Shaffer's photographic record from the first several days of his 1948 hike because that record is particularly confusing, if not chaotic.<sup>5</sup>

Shaffer apparently started taking photographs of his 1948 hike on April 3<sup>rd</sup> using a roll of Ansco Color film, with Frame No. 10 apparently being his first slide of the trip with several frames already exposed in earlier photographs (perhaps taken during his travel to Georgia). Intermingled with those 1948 slides are slides from at least one, and perhaps two, other rolls of Ansco Color film he apparently used to take photographs in the same area in a later (full-leaf) season, probably during his 1950 trip. For additional confusion, intermingled with those 2-3 rolls of Ansco Color are three of the glass-mount slides that appear to be from completely different source than the Ansco slides.

The result of that commingling of slides can be seen in the jumbled sequence of frame numbers found on the Shaffer slides in the NMAH 1948 AT Slides collection, which are the slides selected and arranged by Shaffer for use in his slide show. There are 12 slides featured in that collection as recording Shaffer's hike on April 4 - 8, when he crossed the summit of Blood Mt.

The sequence of frame numbers found on those photographs is as follows<sup>6</sup>

Slide No.	Film Number
001	10
002	Glass Mount
003	6
004	13
005	Glass Mount
006	3
007	16
008	14
009	20c
010	6
011	9
012	Glass Mount

Slides 003 and 010 display full-leaf foliage,<sup>7</sup> so don't appear to be Shaffer slides from his 1948 hike.<sup>8</sup> Disregarding those late-season slides, and the glass-mount slides as outliers from some unknown source, one can roughly assemble an 001 (10), 004 (13), 008 (14), 007 (16), and 009 (20c<sup>9</sup>) sequence of Shaffer's actual photography on April 3-8, up to the time he reached Blood Mt. That means of the first 12 slides in Shaffer's slide show, only 5 appear to be actual slides he took on his 1948 hike.<sup>10</sup>

Although LBN does not present a slide-by-slide record of photographs as taken, there are frequent references to Shaffer taking photographs. There are also references in WWS to Shaffer having taken photographs at certain locations. Shaffer's narratives are, however, silent as to any photography by Shaffer's upon his arrival at the mountain he believed to be Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3, 1948, while he was camped that night at a cabin by the fire tower, or of his departure from the summit of that mountain on April 4<sup>th</sup> to begin his AT hike.

What is very prominently not in the record of Shaffer's 1948 AT hike is a summit photograph of Mt. Oglethorpe. An awareness in Shaffer that he should have taken a summit photograph, but didn't, is suggested in WSS (at 8) when he states that "[I]aunching of the 'Long Cruise' was totally lacking in ceremony." The commencement of a journey as remarkable in a person's life as a hike of the entire AT does generally involve a "ceremony" that includes an "at the beginning" photograph. He describes the monument and "looking at the battered [AT] sign . . ." but there is no photograph of him, or his pack, beside the monument or the sign.<sup>11</sup> He fails to explain why his departure on April 3<sup>rd</sup> from what he believed to be Mt. Oglethorpe was so "totally lacking in ceremony" – including his apparent failure to take any photographs.

What is in the record are four slides in the Shaffer Slides that are identified as having been taken on Mt. Oglethorpe. It should be noted, however, that Shaffer does not discuss the actual taking of any of these photographs in his writings or in the narrative of the DVD Slide Show.

The first Oglethorpe slide is a photograph of the Oglethorpe Monument.<sup>12</sup> That slide is a color photograph of the Oglethorpe Monument on the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe. This photograph

appears to be the same one featured in WWS, at page 10, with the background cropped and only the image of the monument shown. That slide is also in the DVD Slide Show as No. 2.

The Oglethorpe Monument slide is a glass-mount slide. A number of similar glass-mount slides are distributed throughout the Shaffer photographic collection.<sup>13</sup> These glass-mount slides have an entirely different appearance than the other Shaffer slides, with an impression of being professionally, or at least very carefully, mounted. The colors in the images of the slides appear to be more faded than other Shaffer collection photographs, suggesting that the slides are older than other Shaffer slides. Other than those glass-mount slides, the other Shaffer slides are either Ansco Color cardboard mounts or various assorted Kodachrome mounts.

The view of the Oglethorpe Monument shown in the slide has what might be termed a generic look that is remarkable under the reported circumstances of its taking. The slide shows the monument and its base<sup>14</sup> with a grassy, somewhat weedy, foreground, with virtually nothing else appearing in the photograph. The sky appears cloudless, and there is not broad-leaf foliage visible on the trees and shrubs. The photograph therefore appears to have been taken during the “leaf-off” season, which would include early April at the elevation of Mt. Oglethorpe.

That “leaf-off” appearance and the cloudless sky indicates that the monument slide was not taken at the same time as the other three Oglethorpe slides which, as will be discussed below, were taken under “leaf-on” summer-like conditions with substantial cloudiness.

According to LBN and WWS, as well as Shaffer’s other writings, he arrived on Mt. Oglethorpe at or near sunset on April 3 and departed the summit just after sunrise on April 4. Although it is difficult for an amateur eye to determine, the lighting of the Shaffer photograph of the monument does not appear to be consistent with such early morning or late evening lighting.

The photograph does not include an image of Shaffer at the monument similar to the Mt. Katahdin northern terminus photograph featured in WWS (at 152). It includes no image of any object that might be associated with Shaffer, such as his pack, that would “personalize” the photograph. There is therefore no feature of the photograph that intrinsically indicates that Shaffer took the photograph, or that he was present when it was taken.<sup>15</sup>

Although a contemporary (i.e., 1948 era) photograph of the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe showing the monument and its surroundings has not yet been located by this author against which to compare the Shaffer photograph, the written description of the summit as found in the 1950 Guide (at 355) states that

On its [Mt. Oglethorpe’s] open summit are a visitor’s registration cylinder, an Appalachian Trail terminus marker and a marble shaft [the Oglethorpe Monument].

From that description, one would expect to find one or more of those AT items near, or at least visible in, Shaffer’s claimed photograph of the monument. No such sign or registration cylinder can be seen in the photograph.

As presented in the Shaffer photograph, the monument has a strikingly “clean” appearance, with no visible stains, painted names or other graffiti, or cracks. It does not appear to be visibly aged or vandalized. An examination of the image in the WWS Index DVD (No. 3) by “zooming” is particularly striking by that lack of apparent aging and graffiti. In fact, that image resembles to a remarkable degree the image of the same Oglethorpe Monument that is now located in downtown Jasper, Ga., after having been removed from Mt. Oglethorpe and cleaned and restored before being

installed at its new location. By 1948, the monument had been in place for nearly 20 years, with reports of vandalism over that time. Yet the Shaffer photograph doesn't show such aging, vandalism or graffiti: the image appears strikingly "new."

Another remarkable aspect of the photograph is how "clean" the monument's surroundings appear. As was discussed earlier, GATC documents reviewed at the Georgia Archives in 2010 reported that the appearance of the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe in 1948 was marred by a "tarpaper" structure along with extensive cast-off litter and debris that had been left behind by a military operation on the summit that was active during WWII. No such litter or debris is visible in the Shaffer photograph.

The particular type of mounting makes it part of a group of slides, all seemingly of distinctive views on the AT of the 1930's and 40', with similar mounts and similar "faded" colors, that are scattered throughout the Shaffer slides. The mounting and seemingly faded colors, along with the specific aspects of the image discussed above, leads the author to the purely amateur conclusion that the slide is an image of the monument from a much earlier time than 1948, perhaps prior to WWII, from a set of slides of AT features from that earlier era incorporated at some point by Shaffer into his slide collection. This is just speculation, of course, in the absence of professional examination of the slide sufficient to establish its age and relationship, if any, with the cardboard mount Shaffer slides.

There has been, thus far, no feature of the Oglethorpe Monument slide identified (such as lack of an AT sign, or dating of the mount or film) that precludes it having been taken by Shaffer on April 3 - 4, 1948. Being, however, a generic slide with neither Shaffer nor any equipment identifiable as being associated with his 1948 hike, it cannot serve as documentation as to his presence on Mt. Oglethorpe at any particular time.

The second Mt. Oglethorpe photograph is a photograph of the AT southern terminus sign on that summit.<sup>16</sup> WWS displayed a drawing of that sign (at pg. 7), but does not feature a copy of the photograph. The AT sign slide is a prominent feature of the DVD Slide Show, with it following the Oglethorpe Monument Slide (Nos. 2 and 3) as representing Shaffer's presence on Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>, 1948.<sup>17</sup>

The AT sign slide is an Ansco Color mount slide. Examination of the marginal film information indicated that its number in the roll was "6." The photograph is a close-up, showing only the face of the AT southern terminus sign. It is a generic image, without Shaffer or any object associated with him or his 1948 hike seen in the image.

In order for Shaffer to have taken that photograph on his 1948 hike, it would have had to have been taken on April 3 or 4, 1948. As the image is shown in the DVD Slide Show (as Slide No. 003) 's, including the DVD Slide Show, no vegetation is apparently visible. However, when the mount of the slide in the NMAH 1948 AT Slides collection was examined, it was noticed that black tape had been used to mask, or crop, the part of the image along on the right side and the bottom. When the tape was removed, the portion of the slide formerly masked displayed a close-up image of broad-leaf vegetation.

Upon that revelation, closer (zoomed-in) inspection of that slide in the WWS Index DVD (No. 004) revealed the black mark of the tape along the bottom of the slide masking the image. That close view revealed one stem of seasonal (i.e., summer-like) vegetation visible above the masking right below the last "A" in the word "APPALACHIAN" and the top of another leaf visible under the "T" in the word "TRAIL" along the bottom (in "GEORGIA APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB").

The “cropping” of that photograph by that tape masked approximately 18% of the image horizontally and 9% vertically. The entire image masked was of broad-leaf vegetation.

The presence of such broad-leaf vegetation in the photograph is entirely inconsistent with the photograph having been taken on Mt. Oglethorpe in early April, since that is too early in the year for such vegetation. As noted by Shaffer in WWS (at 9) the forest on Mt. Oglethorpe when he was there was “. . . still leafless.” With removal of the image-cropping tape and revelation of the broad-leaf foliage around the sign, it can be conclusively said that the AT southern terminus sign slide was not taken on April 3-4, 1948. The broad-leaf vegetation visible in the unmasked photograph could not have been present that early in the year on Mt. Oglethorpe.

Circumstantial evidence exists that Shaffer’s AT southern terminus sign slide was actually taken sometime after September 1949. That evidence is found in a photograph that appeared in that August 1949 *National Geographic* article “Skyline Trail From Maine To Georgia.”<sup>18</sup> What is relevant therein to the dating of that Shaffer slide is that on page 224 of that article was featured a photograph of the AT southern terminus sign on Mt. Oglethorpe. That photograph, which was reportedly taken prior to 1948, showed the sign without any defacement to the letters displayed thereon. In particular, the mileage of the AT (2,050) is plainly legible.

In contrast, the Shaffer photograph of that same sign shows very specific defacement to the text displayed on the sign in that the mileage of the AT was been obliterated. The mileage of the AT displayed on that sign (i.e., the “2,050) can not be read (reading 2 - - 0, with the intervening “05” dug out of the wood of the sign), while the remainder of the text appears undisturbed from the image seen in the *National Geographic* photograph.<sup>19</sup>

It should be first noted, then, that Shaffer could not have read the “2,050” from that sign when the photograph was taken. So the textual reproduction of that sign in WWS (at 7) as a representation of that sign when Shaffer took that photograph is not an accurate statement of what appeared in that image of the sign because in the WWS text the mileage (2,050) is displayed. On the sign in the Shaffer photograph, that number is not legible. The defacement to the sign is very exact in a carving out of those particular numbers that makes the “2,050” no longer legible. It does not therefore appear to be the result of some random act of vandalism. It appears, in fact, that the sign has been very carefully and exactly defaced for the specific purpose of obliterating that number.

That may well have been the case. The official distance of the AT was, as of 1941, 2,050 miles.<sup>20</sup> In September 1949, that official distance was changed to 2,028 miles by ATC Publication 17.<sup>21</sup> That specific defacement of that sign may well have been intended to “block out” the “2,050,” the official mileage when that *National Geographic* photograph was taken prior to 1948, so as to not confuse or misinform hikers after the official mileage was changed in September 1949.

That mileage number having been removed at the time Shaffer took his photograph of that sign is therefore circumstantial evidence that the Shaffer photograph was taken sometime after September 1949.

The third and fourth Mt. Oglethorpe slides can be addressed together.

The third bears the title “Amicalola Falls from Mt. Oglethorpe” and is found in the WWS Index Slides No. 6, but is not included in the DVD Slide Show or the NMAH 1948 AT Slides collection. It is found in the NMAH Lecture Slides.

The fourth bears the title “From Oglethorpe” and is found in the WWS Index Slides No. 7, but is not included in the DVD Slide Show or the NMAH 1948 AT Slides collection. It is found in

the NMAH Lecture Slides.

Both slides are Ansco Color mounts. Both are generic images, without Shaffer or any object associated with him or his 1948 hike seen in the image. Both views portrayed are from an apparent summit to a distant mountain (in the case of the third) or distant lowlands (the fourth). The sky is cloudy in both photographs, and there are trees and other vegetation visible in the foreground of both that display full broad-leaf vegetation.

In order for Shaffer to have taken either of those photographs on his 1948 hike, the photography would have had to have been done on April 3 or 4, 1948. The presence of such broad-leaf vegetation in both photographs is entirely inconsistent with either photograph having been taken on Mt. Oglethorpe in early April, since that is too early in the year for such vegetation. As noted by Shaffer in WWS (at 9) the forest on Mt. Oglethorpe when he was there was “. . . still leafless.”

It can be conclusively said, therefore, that neither the AT sign slide, the “Amicalola Falls from Mt. Oglethorpe” slide nor the “From Mt. Oglethorpe” slide was taken on April 3-4, 1948, on Mt. Oglethorpe. The broad-leaf vegetation visible in each of the photographs could not have been present that early in the year (April 3 -4) on the 3290' summit Mt. Oglethorpe.

Of the three Ansco Color mount slides of Mt. Oglethorpe in the Shaffer record, only the AT sign slide was used, as masked, in the slide show. Why then did Shaffer not make use of the other two slides? The answer is likely that when the film was developed, the obvious broad leaf foliage in all the photographs was noticed. Such images made the slides not useful to present an image consistent with having been taken in early April at that altitude. The AT sign slide, with such foliage visible only along the right side and bottom edge, could be cropped to limit the visible image to the face of the sign. Through such image manipulation, the AT sign slide ended up being the only slide of the three that could be used to appear to represent an image on the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>.

There is no hint in the record that Shaffer had ever visited Mt. Oglethorpe prior to April 1948. It would therefore appear that Shaffer must have made a trip to Georgia at some point after his 1948 hike that included a visit to the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe. That visit was likely made as part of his 1950 automobile trip described in SR 50.

As discussed above, the Shaffer Oglethorpe photographs include three slides (the AT sign, the “Amicalola Falls from Mt. Oglethorpe,” and the “From Mt. Oglethorpe” slides), that show full development of broadleaf foliage not found on that mountain in early April. Those photographs must have therefore been taken in the full foliage season. All are in Ansco Color mounts. There is also in the NMAH 1948 AT Slides collection an Ansco Color mount slide of what is identified as Amicalola Falls (100') that also shows full foliage inconsistent with its having been taken in early April.<sup>22</sup>

The taking of the “100' Amicalola Falls” photograph is discussed by Shaffer in a document found in the Shaffer NMAH collection<sup>23</sup> that appears to be a draft narrative for his 1948 AT hike slide show. In that document (at unnumbered page 3), he seemingly describes the taking of the other Amicalola Falls slide in the collection (NMAH 1948 AT Slides No. 009) by stating he “. . . crawled down through the rhododendron gorge to get this picture.” He then states, in apparent reference to the next slide (the “100' Amicalola Falls slide) that “[t]wo years later I came up from below to take this view of the sheer one hundred foot drop over a ledge.” That would appear to date the “100' Amicalola Falls” photograph as having been taken in 1950.

In that same document (at unnumbered page 4) Shaffer describes taking a supplemental

photograph of the Standing Indian lookout tower, also “two years later.”

There is also in the NMAH collection<sup>24</sup> a single page handwritten document titled “Blood Mtn.” and noted as “Insert D.” It is apparently an insert written by Shaffer for insertion into an early draft of WWS. In that document, Shaffer (presumably) describes sitting in the “rock cabin” on Blood Mtn. and wrote “I came up from Neel Gap last night in the twilight toting the same pack I carried two years ago,” an apparent reference to his 1948 hike.

From that, it can be inferred that Shaffer visited more locations during that 1950 trip than the ones he described in his July 17, 1950, letter.<sup>25</sup> Those additional locations appear to include Amicalola Falls State Park, Blood Mt., and Mt. Oglethorpe.

But whenever taken, if taken by Shaffer it would require his presence on Mt. Oglethorpe. And getting to Mt. Oglethorpe by automobile would require travel to the Sequoyah Lake area and from there travel on the road to Mt. Oglethorpe by the same route that would have been traveled by Shaffer in his route to Mt. Oglethorpe in 1948. So while Shaffer’s 1948 descriptions of his travel to Mt. Oglethorpe would be based on only his experiences and observations during that 1948 hike, his descriptions of the Mt. Oglethorpe approach road and the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe in WWS would have been written with the knowledge about the area as it may have been supplemented by such a 1950 (presumed) automobile trip to Mt. Oglethorpe.

Shaffer’s narrative in WWS of his travels on April 3 - 4, 1948, at the beginning of his 1948 hike was therefore written after he had returned to the Amicalola Ridge, and perhaps to Mt. Oglethorpe for the first time, in (presumably) 1950.

In WWS (at 7 - 8) Shaffer describes a much more straightforward approach to Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3<sup>rd</sup> and departure from that summit on April 4, 1948, than does LBN or SR48. Shaffer begins Chapter 1 of WWS (at 7) with the kind of description of Mt. Oglethorpe that might be expected of a hiker starting an AT journey on that summit. He describes the summit at sunrise, with the “battered and weatherbeaten” AT sign, the “tall white shaft” of the Oglethorpe Monument, and the views to the south extending to Stone Mt., near Atlanta.

What is striking is that while neither LBN nor SR48 makes any mention of the monument, the sign and the views, WWS describes and highlights those summit features. In WWS (at 8), Shaffer reported that he reached the summit of Oglethorpe “near sundown” and found it “. . . exposed to a cold and merciless wind.” He reported he “backtracked to a rickety leanto near a rickety firetower and stayed there.” He then reported that the next morning (Sunday, April 4) was “. . . cold and blustery” (quoting LBN), and noted that “[a]t least the scramble back to the summit warmed me up a little.” WWS at 8. He then described his departure on his hike early in the morning of April 4, in WWS (at 7).

The most important common thread between the 1948 descriptions and WWS is the reference to a shelter/leanto near a fire tower where Shaffer spent the night, as WWS refers to a “rickety leanto near a rickety firetower” to which he “backtracked” to camp that first night. So whether reading the LBN, SR48, or WWS, one is confronted with the question of where that shelter/lean-to near the fire tower was located to which Shaffer backtracked to camp, then from which he returned the next morning to begin his AT hike.

The record of Shaffer’s hike and of the AT in 1948, as reviewed above, appears to establish that the only such leanto/shelter near a fire tower that Shaffer would have passed on his way to Mt. Oglethorpe was the cabin beside the old Sassafras Mt. fire tower, 3.3 miles north of Mt. Oglethorpe on the AT. In the absence of locating any other structure that would meet that description, any

analysis of Shaffer's travels on April 3-4 as described in WWS must incorporate his arrival on Mt. Oglethorpe on the evening of April 3, his backtracking to the Sassafras Mt. cabin to camp, his return to the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe the next morning, and his departure from that summit to follow the AT north.

Review of aerial photographs from that time period also indicate that the cabin and tower at Sassafras Mt. were the only such structure complex on that ridge. Inspection of two aerial photographs taken on November 30, 1949,<sup>26</sup> that cover the ridge and connecting road from Mt. Oglethorpe to Sassafras Mt. show the cabin and tower at Sassafras Mt. At the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe, the monument is the only visible structure.<sup>27</sup> There are no other structures visible along the road between that summit and the cabin and tower at Sassafras Mt.

Unless, then, one can locate some other cabin by a fire tower on the AT nearer to Mt. Oglethorpe in 1948 than the one at Sassafras Mt., the WWS-described travel between Mt. Oglethorpe and the Sassafras Mt. cabin would entail (1) Shaffer passing the Sassafras Mt. cabin and fire tower on the way to Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3, reaching it reportedly at sundown, (2) hiking back the 3.3 miles to that cabin and tower after reaching that summit, (3) returning with his loaded pack to the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe the next morning over the same 3.3 miles section of road and AT (for the third time), and then (4) starting his hike north from Mt. Oglethorpe the morning of April 4 by hiking north the 3.3 miles to the Sassafras Mt. cabin for the fourth time, all reported in WWS to have been with a fully-loaded pack.

Such back-and-forth travel over a 3.3 mile section of the AT for no reason more pressing than to spend the night in a run-down cabin by an old fire tower seems puzzling, if not nonsensical. And it is even more puzzling or nonsensical when one considers the likely existence of any number of areas in the woods on the slopes or around the base of Mt. Oglethorpe at which Shaffer could have conveniently camped that night. There might have even been one or more primitive leanto structures built by hunters or other visitors in the area that might have been located by scouting.<sup>28</sup> While probably not providing shelter as substantial as the Sassafras Mt. cabin, camping at such a site would have avoided the backtrack to that cabin. And while the Sassafras Mt. cabin was reported to have no access to water,<sup>29</sup> there was a reported seasonal spring in the embankment of the road to the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe that may well have had at least some flow at that time of year.<sup>30</sup> And while Shaffer reported a threat of rain that night in the LBN and the 1948 Shaffer Report, the weather reports for the area (Jasper I NNW to the west and Dahlenega to the east) indicated that after about 0.5" of precipitation on April 1 and about 0.1" on April 2, April 3 featured lower nighttime temperatures (37° in Jasper and 33° in Dahlenega<sup>31</sup>) with no precipitation, with again no precipitation reported at either station on April 4 or 5. So for purposes of camping, there would not seem to be any compelling reason for Shaffer to backtrack all the way to the Sassafras Mt. cabin and tower merely for the purpose of camping for the night if, in fact, he reached the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The problem with Shaffer's WWS narrative is, then, that having placed himself on the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe the evening of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, identified his campsite that night at a cabin by the old fire tower, and put himself back on that same summit the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup>, he has to go back and forth from that summit to wherever that cabin and fire tower was in 1948. Once the 3.3 mile distance between the known location of the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe and the location of what was apparently the only such cabin/fire tower complex on that ridge north of that summit – the one at Sassafras Mt. – is known, WWS sends Shaffer on that incredible back-and-forth 13.2 miles of travel from the cabin to the summit and then back to the cabin on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, then on April 4<sup>th</sup> from the cabin back to the summit and then finally north on the AT, again to the cabin.

That WWS narrative was finalized long after Shaffer had traveled along the Amicalola Ridge

and to Mt. Oglethorpe by automobile, apparently in 1950. If the mountain from which Shaffer had started his 1948 AT hike did not feature a prominent AT sign and a marble monument on its summit, the August 1949 *National Geographic* article would put him on notice that he had an “Oglethorpe problem.” If so, his 1950 visit to the area would have enabled him to comprehend how his erroneous identification of the south summit of Sassafras Mt. as Mt. Oglethorpe caused his error in 1948.

His narrative in WWS continued to be constrained, however, by the fact that he had mentioned the cabin by the fire tower so prominently in SR48 as being associated with “Mt. Oglethorpe.” If he did figure out by 1949 that the cabin and fire tower were a lot further from Mt. Oglethorpe than he thought in 1948, the filing of SR48 with the ATC made it difficult to change such a prominently mentioned campsite as he wrote the several drafts of WWS over the following years. So understanding at some point that the cabin by the fire tower wasn’t a location one went “down to” from the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe (as he had related in LBN and SR48), his WWS narrative accurately noted that it would instead be a “backtrack” to return to the Sassafras Mt. cabin/tower after reaching Mt. Oglethorpe on the AT from Ga. 136. If a reader knew about the Sassafras Mt. cabin/tower, knew it was the only such complex on the ridge, and knew how far it was from Oglethorpe, the “back-and-forth” travel might raise questions.<sup>32</sup> But by publication of WWS in the 1980’s, the Sassafras Mt. cabin and tower existed only in old AT guides of a long-abandoned section of the AT, or on old maps or aerial photographs of the period. If Shaffer had an “Oglethorpe problem,” it apparently disappeared when the AT south of Amicalola Falls State Park disappeared from the AT in the late 1950’s and from the memory of the AT community by the publication date of WWS. So WWS, as finally published, and SR48 as filed with the ATC (and now published on the Shaffer Foundation website), seem generally consistent to a casual reader of the modern era.

What can be concluded, in the absence of some discovery of the existence of a cabin and fire tower substantially closer to Mt. Oglethorpe in April 1948 than that at Sassafras Mt., is that Shaffer’s descriptions of Mt. Oglethorpe and of his travel to the summit on April 3-4, 1948, as found in the record reviewed for this report do not present a consistent factual narrative to establish that the mountain summit he describes reaching on April 3, 1948, was, in fact, Mt. Oglethorpe.

A further indication of Shaffer’s failure to reach Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3, 1948, is found in his own voice, as he narrated his memories of the taking of the Sequoyah Lake photograph in the DVD Slide Show. As has been noted, there was found in the NMAH collection what appears to be a draft slide show script<sup>33</sup> in which Shaffer described his search for “that elusive mountain” as he searched for Mt. Oglethorpe. But we also have Shaffer’s recorded narration of the DVD Slide Show (reportedly in the 1980’s). And that narration seems unscripted. By that time, Shaffer had narrated that slide show to countless groups over literally decades. He needed no script. So as he viewed the slides, he spoke of what he recalled from a hike that was by then more than 30 years in his past.

As Shaffer viewed the Sequoyah Lake self-portrait photograph, he is heard to say that

this is on the top of the mountain about 3 miles from Mt. Oglethorpe  
as I was searching for the mountain . . .

Mt. Oglethorpe is, in fact, about 6 ½ miles from Sequoyah Lake. But what is about 3 miles from that location is the summit of Sassafras Mt.

Consideration of the reported mileage traveled by Shaffer on April 4<sup>th</sup> also weighs against the WWS narrative being accurate. As has been discussed previously, Shaffer’s LBN/SR48 narratives appear to have Shaffer traveling the 15.6 AT miles from the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe to the lake at Amicalola Falls State Park by noon on April 4<sup>th</sup>. It has been noted that it seemed unlikely that Shaffer covered that distance by noon. However, if the WWS narrative is to be accepted, it would

seemingly require that Shaffer leave the Sassafras Mt. Cabin, hike with full pack the 3.3 miles south on the AT to the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe, and only then start north on the AT, retracing that 3.3 miles to Sassafras Mt. That is what Shaffer reported he did in WWS (at 8).

According to the WWS narrative, Shaffer therefore hiked not 15.6 miles to the lake at Amicalola Falls, but an extraordinary distance of 18.9 miles to that lake (by noon) as he started at Sassafras Mt., hiked to Mt. Oglethorpe, and only then started north on the AT. Adding in the 6-7 miles further he hiked that day to his camp on the southern slope of Springer Mt. that night, his daily mileage on April 4<sup>th</sup> would have had to been a total of 25-26 miles to follow his WWS narrative.

A further mileage issue is raised in the WWS narrative by Shaffer's report therein (at 9) that he traveled back to Sequoyah Lake on the 4<sup>th</sup>, where he took the self portrait discussed previously. For that to be true, Shaffer would have had to stray from the AT that morning, since that location was not on the AT. Such an off-AT detour to Sequoyah Lake on the 4<sup>th</sup> would have required that Shaffer travel approximately 2 additional miles.

Shaffer's WWS narrative therefore describes Shaffer leaving the cabin at the fire tower (Sassafras Mt.) the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup>, traveling south on the AT to the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe, turning around at that point to travel north on the AT, diverting from the AT to reach Sequoyah Lake, and then reaching a lake where people were picnicking (Amicalola Falls State Park) by noon describes a hike with a mileage of about 21 miles, by noon, and a total for the day of 27-28 miles. That would have likely been the highest, or near highest, mileage day of his entire AT hike. Shaffer certainly did not report any such high mileage on that day.

However, if the LBN/SR48 narratives are followed, with an apparent start not at Mt. Oglethorpe but rather at Sassafras Mt., and with the Sequoyah Lake photograph taken on the 3<sup>rd</sup> rather than the 4<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer's mileage to the lake at Amicalola Falls would be 3.3 miles less than that from Mt. Oglethorpe. That would require that he hike only 12.3 miles by noon, which given his early start a 2 mph pace would accomplish. With his side trip to the falls and his reported weariness late in the day, the additional 6-7 miles covered that day (for a total of 18-19 miles for the day) seems much more reasonable than the WWS narrative of his hiking 21 miles by noon and a total for the day of 27-28 miles.

There is, therefore, nothing in the 1948 Shaffer record – including LBN, SR48 or his 1948 photographs – that documents Shaffer's presence on Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3-4, 1948. His WWS narrative of his travels on April 3-4, 1948, and his description of the mountain he believed to be Mt. Oglethorpe at that time, are not consistent with the narratives of LBN and SR48. Of the two narratives, the LBN/SR48 narratives are substantially more contemporary than that in WWS and appear to be the most factual as to Shaffer's actual experiences and observations on those days.

Shaffer's later (probably 1950) photographs of Mt. Oglethorpe appear to be, like his later-written WWS narrative, attempts in 1950 to supplement the record of Shaffer's 1948 hike to include apparent documentation of his presence on that summit in 1948. The "cropping" of the AT sign slide by black tape to mask from the viewed image the full-leaf vegetation visible in that slide is perhaps the most dramatic evidence of such post-hike supplementation of his record. Shaffer's pervasive silence in his narratives as to the circumstances of his taking (or perhaps obtaining, in the case of the glass-mount slides) the photographs of the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe featured in his slide show or otherwise found in the photographic record of his 1948 hike, and in particular his including that manipulated slide of the AT sign on Oglethorpe into his photographic record without disclosure of its source and nature, both add weight to the inference that Shaffer did create post-hike documentation of his April 1948 presence on Mt. Oglethorpe when, in fact, he was not on the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe at that time.

Did Shaffer actually begin his 1948 AT hike on the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe? Looking at it from the perspective of what “proof” Shaffer offered to document his presence on that summit on April 3-4, 1948, there is nothing in that record other than the long-after-the-fact narrative in WWS to document the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe as his actual starting point. There is nothing in that record, in fact, that places Shaffer anywhere on the Amicalola Ridge south of Sassafras Mt. on April 3-4, 1948. Looking at it therefore from the perspective of the record of that hike – the 1948 narratives as well as fitting those narratives into the 1948 landscape of the Amicalola Ridge – it appears that Shaffer made a serious navigational error on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, misidentified the southern summit of Sassafras Mt. as Mt. Oglethorpe, and thereby started his hike 3.3 miles north of Mt. Oglethorpe.

If Shaffer did misidentify Sassafras Mt. as Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3-4, 1948, how could that have happened? How could Shaffer not know where Mt. Oglethorpe was, or what to expect to see on the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe when the summit of that mountain was such a distinctive location on the AT in 1948? By what scenario with support in the record could Shaffer have made such a error?

To address those questions, it is necessary to return again to Shaffer’s navigational decisions and travels on April 3-4, 1948. The review of that initial part of Shaffer’s 1948 hike was presented previously in Chapter 6, but that review was suspended because it was necessary to bring into the record the post-hike matters presented in later chapters. With those matters now in this Report, the next chapter shall present just such a scenario by which Shaffer may well have made one of the more spectacular navigational errors in AT history by starting his northbound AT not at the southern terminus of the AT at Mt. Oglethorpe, but instead 3.3 miles north of that summit at Sassafras Mt.

## CHAPTER 16 MT. OGLETHORPE - AMICALOLA FALLS (PART II)

If Shaffer did misidentify Sassafras Mt. as Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3-4, 1948, how could that have happened? How could Shaffer have not known where Mt. Oglethorpe was, or what to expect to see on the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe when the summit of that mountain was such a distinctive location on the AT in 1948? By what scenario that matches the record could Shaffer have made such a error?

The scenario that best matches the available record commences at Sequoyah Lake, as Shaffer stood on the dam at that lake at the community of Tate Mt. Estates on April 3<sup>rd</sup> engaged in taking a self-portrait of himself, pack on his back, with the lake and a distant summit in the background. As previously discussed, that photograph was described in the DVD Slide Show narrative as being taken on April 3<sup>rd</sup> and in WWS (at 9) as being taken on April 4<sup>th</sup>. Based on the discussion in the previous chapter, this scenario will accept the April 3<sup>rd</sup> date for the photograph.<sup>1</sup>

As noted, the DVD Slide Show narrative states that the self-portrait at Sequoyah Lake was taken on April 3<sup>rd</sup> while he was “. . . searching for the mountain.” In the NMAH collection<sup>2</sup> is what appears to be a draft of a written narrative for Shaffer’s slide show. In that written narrative, he describes his arrival in Jasper (including the anecdote about the man at the post office) and then states, in an apparent description of the Sequoyah Lake self-portrait, that “this picture shows me [~~“that afternoon”~~ struck out] at a road gap still searching for that elusive mountain.”

Given the importance of this photograph, a detailed description is appropriate.

That photograph features in the immediate foreground the roadbed across the dam, with Shaffer standing just beyond the roadbed, half-turned and facing generally east with the lake visible behind him. Just beyond the distant shore of the lake can be seen a field with a house at its upper edge. The skyline is defined by a rounded summit to the east. The person in the photograph (Shaffer) is wearing what appears to be a fully-loaded pack.<sup>3</sup> Lighting for the photograph appears to be coming from sunlight from the rear of the photograph (or from the west with the view generally east), which suggests that the photograph was taken in the afternoon.

The slide itself can be examined in the NMAH 1948 AT Slides collection (File 001). It is probably Ansco Color film. A scan is available in the Shaffer Foundation WWS Index DVD, No. 1. The original slide bears the marginal film number “10.” The original mount has been removed and the slide remounted in a Kodachrome mount with a transparency inserted into the mount to display the title “Walking With Spring” on the face of the slide when shown.

The location of and view shown in that photograph were apparently important to Shaffer at the time, as he took the time to set up a self-portrait. Such self-portraits were, after all, not common for Shaffer, and required careful setting up.<sup>4</sup> A review of the Shaffer slides shows very few presumed self-portraits during the 1948 hike. The NMAH 1948 AT Slides collection contains only 4 of what appear to be self-portraits: the Sequoyah Lake photograph in Georgia, one at Tagg Run Shelter and one at Centerpoint Knob, both in Pennsylvania, and one at Mt. Katahdin in Maine. Shaffer chose the Sequoyah Lake location for one of those rare self-portraits and apparently attached such importance to the photograph that he chose it as the cover photograph for his 1981 publication of WWS<sup>5</sup> and as the title photograph for his slide show as recorded in the DVD Slide Show.

What was Shaffer doing, then, at the dam at Sequoyah Lake on April 3<sup>rd</sup> taking the time to

set up a self-portrait of him as he looked across the lake at that distant ridge and summit? SR48, DVD Slide Show, and WWS Draft narratives all state that he was on that dam looking for Mt. Oglethorpe. That location was not, however, either on the way to Mt. Oglethorpe from Jasper, and was more than 6 miles away from and not within sight of that mountain. His being on the dam on April 3<sup>rd</sup> therefore suggests he had made a wrong turn on his way to Mt. Oglethorpe. From the Ga. 108/Ga. 136 intersection, he would have had to turn left on Ga. 108 to reach the dam. The correct turn at that intersection was not left on Ga. 108 toward the dam, but instead a right turn on Ga. 136.

The SR48, DVD Slide Show, and WWS Draft narratives all suggest that Shaffer suffered considerable confusion in finding Mt. Oglethorpe. SR48 refers to “considerable fumbling around before getting on the right track,” the WWS Draft reports Shaffer “still searching for that elusive mountain,” and the DVD Slide Show narration describes Shaffer as “. . . searching for the mountain” at the Sequoyah Lake photograph location. Shaffer gives no further details as to the cause of that confusion, but the “considerable fumbling around” language suggests he lost his way at some point and had to look for the mountain “before getting on the right track.” Reference to Mt. Oglethorpe being “that elusive mountain” is particularly notable.

The taking of such a photograph suggests that Shaffer was feeling confident of his course at that time. It also suggests that the view into which he was gazing in that photograph was one he felt significant – significant enough to warrant the self-portrait. His reports of confusion could reflect that after being confident of his course toward Mt. Oglethorpe as he took the self-portrait, he later realized his misdirection.

What was Shaffer doing, and what was he looking at, at that dam on April 3<sup>rd</sup>? All the circumstances suggest that as he looked over Sequoyah Lake at that distant summit, he believed he was looking at Mt. Oglethorpe. After all, Shaffer was not familiar with northern Georgia, had no AT Guidebook and had apparently had no information about that area except that he could gain from a road map. So there is nothing in the record to suggest that Shaffer knew anything about the AT in Georgia than the fact that Mt. Oglethorpe was the southern terminus of the AT, its location on a road map, and the trace of the AT visible on such a road map.

There is a very real possibility that Shaffer was relying in his April 3<sup>rd</sup> travels on a map that had Mt. Oglethorpe in the wrong relative location to Ga. 136. In reviewing several different oil company road maps for this Report, it was noted that a Sinclair Oil Company (Rand McNally) “Alabama - Georgia” road map from that era did mistakenly locate Mt. Oglethorpe at a point north of Ga. 136 and east of Ga. 108, rather than approximately 6 miles south of Ga. 136. It appeared that the route of the new Ga. 136 had been dislocated to the south, rather than correctly to the north, of that mountain. Since the Sinclair road maps folded more compactly than other oil company maps, Shaffer may have selected such a map for use. If he was using a Sinclair map, it would certainly explain why Shaffer was where he was and why he was looking east.<sup>6</sup> Use of the Sinclair map would also explain Shaffer’s reporting he traveled “in the general direction” of Mt. Oglethorpe when he left Jasper heading north, then east, to Sequoyah Lake.

It is true that if Shaffer was using an Esso map of the era, its detail would have also directed him along the course he followed as far as the Ga. 136/ Ga. 108 intersection by showing the Mt. Oglethorpe road leading south from Ga. 136 (although misnumbered as Ga. 154). But, as discussed, it is unlikely he was using an Esso map. Other road maps, if more accurate than the Rand McNally Sinclair Oil map, would have likely placed Mt. Oglethorpe east of Jasper, but with no road access shown on the map.

Whether guided by the sight of Mt. Oglethorpe on the eastern ridge or by its location to the east on a map, a hiker walking “in the general direction” of Mt. Oglethorpe from Jasper would move

east, not north. If Shaffer believed that the general direction to Mt. Oglethorpe was northeast from Jasper, it may well then have been because he was navigating by an erroneous Sinclair Oil map (or some other Rand McNally map with the same error).

So whether following an inaccurate road map, erroneous local directions, or just having not realized he had made a wrong turn, Shaffer could well have been on the dam at Sequoyah Lake on April 3<sup>rd</sup> on what he thought was the route to Mt. Oglethorpe, and he may well have put such importance on that view to the east from the dam at Sequoyah Lake because he then believed he was looking at Mt. Oglethorpe when he was viewing that summit to the east. What Shaffer may well have been doing was setting up a self-portrait to begin the story of his hike by showing himself looking across a mountain lake toward the summit of what he then believed to be Mt. Oglethorpe.

The taking of such a photograph suggests that Shaffer was feeling confident of his course at that time. His reports of confusion could reflect that after being confident of his course toward Mt. Oglethorpe as he took the self-portrait, he later realized his misdirection.

That point of being disabused of his confused belief as to the location of Mt. Oglethorpe may well have been where the Mt. Oglethorpe Road turned off Ga. 136. If Shaffer wished to hike toward that summit he was looking at in the Sequoyah Lake photograph, he would return to Ga. 136 and hike east. If he did, he would almost immediately see the gravel road turning south with a “Mt. Oglethorpe” sign directing him south, away from the course he was following. That experience would account for the “considerable fumbling around before getting on the right track” language in SR 48.

What the record establishes is that Shaffer was at Sequoyah Lake on April 3<sup>rd</sup> on his way to Mt. Oglethorpe, that he took a self-portrait with no particular relationship to the AT at a location not on the route to Mt. Oglethorpe, that he suffered some sort of confusion or misdirection while in that area, and that he believed that he did get “on the right track” to Mt. Oglethorpe. One could conclude that Shaffer very likely came to believe he finally was “on the right track” when he saw the “Mt. Oglethorpe” sign at that intersection on Ga. 136.

Other than perhaps that “Mt. Oglethorpe” sign at the intersection of the road to Mt. Oglethorpe with Ga. 136, and perhaps directions given by local residents he had talked to, Shaffer would have had little else to reassure him of the route to follow to Mt. Oglethorpe when he turned off Ga. 136 to follow that gravel road. When the gravel road turned right after about ½ mile with only an unimproved fire road continuing ahead headed east, it could well have been after some confusion and with little confidence that he finally chose to continue ahead on the unimproved road, climbing the ridge.

After approximately 1½ miles, he would have been relieved to see a white blaze on a tree beside the road as he reached the crest of the ridge. He then saw the AT, with white blazes marking a trail to the north, joining the road from the left, and the road ahead, marked by that white blaze, turning south. It was probably at that point, with him on the AT he had come to hike, that he finally got through, by “. . . trial and error” that “. . . considerable fumbling around” to “finally got on the right track . . .” to that “elusive mountain,” Mt. Oglethorpe.

It was certainly getting late in the day. His pack was awkward and heavy as he walked south on the ridge, seeing only occasional white blazes and no other sign of the AT’s presence. After about another hour of hiking on a fairly level ridge line, he saw to the right a run-down one-room cabin beside an old dilapidated fire tower on a low summit. It was reassuring to see that it looked like it was regularly used for camping by AT hikers. As the wind grew colder and the sun set, he hoped that Mt. Oglethorpe wasn’t far so he could return to the cabin to camp.

The road ahead crossed the ridge, with another low summit ahead, then swung west to pass that summit to the right. As it passed that summit, the road abruptly swung east to pass to the south of that summit, and steeply descended. Ahead, he could see a valley far below in the gathering dusk. It looked like the road was leaving the ridge, and that summit that looked so low from the north featured a dramatic slope to the south. It looked like the ridge was ending. Was that Mt. Oglethorpe?

He retraced his steps to look more closely at that summit.

Review of an aerial photograph taken on November 30, 1949,<sup>7</sup> indicates that the southern summit of Sassafras Mt. was a wooded, featureless summit. The photograph shows a faint access road to the summit from the Ga. 136 - Mt. Oglethorpe road as it passed between the two summits of Sassafras Mt., just south of the cabin and tower complex on the northern summit. The summit area appears to be wooded in the photograph, with what appears to be a circular road around the summit.<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to tell from that photograph, but it appears that the area encompassed by that circular road could have been cleared at one time, with younger trees within the area encompassed by that road. From that aerial photograph, it therefore appears that there was a woods road leading to that summit in 1948 and some evidence of past activity, but that the summit was then a featureless wooden summit.

So as Shaffer climbed the faint road to that southern summit of Sassafras Mt., he saw no signs, no blazes. But going ahead on the main fire road meant plunging off the ridge. From that wooded summit, he could see through valleys far below on what looked like all sides. And steep slopes to all sides, except the north. This had to be Mt. Oglethorpe. From what he had already seen of the AT on this ridge, it was only barely marked at all, and he'd seen no signs like he remembered seeing on the AT in Pennsylvania. So it had to be that it wasn't much of a trail to begin with up here, and that any sign of the AT had disappeared during the war years.

The sun was going down, and the night ahead was going to be windy, very cold (37° in Jasper and 33° in Dahlonega<sup>9</sup>) and very dark.<sup>10</sup> Georgia had turned out to be a lot more mountainous, the climate a lot colder, and his pack a lot heavier and more uncomfortable than he had anticipated. This had to be Mt. Oglethorpe, and the next thing to do was to get back to that cabin, build a fire for the night, and fix something to eat.

Shaffer arose early the next morning having learned that night just how inadequate a single blanket was going to be for this hike. He scrambled back up to the southern summit to look as well as he could at the surrounding countryside in the low light of dawn. He could faintly see the shape of a ridge or mountain out in the distance to the south, but it was no higher than this one. And was it even connected to this summit at all? It didn't look like it. And he had seen a couple of lone peaks out in this direction from Jasper.<sup>11</sup>

This had to be Oglethorpe. And this was just one of those places where the AT had just disappeared, just as he thought he would find.

But what about the summit photograph he intended to take with the timer on the Retina's shutter? Looking around him at the featureless summit, with views in all directions limited Shaffer realized there was nothing to take a photograph of in this desolate place. This was no place or time for ceremony. It was very windy, and very cold.<sup>12</sup> "And the shrill wind seemed to be saying, 'Get moving, Ridgerunner, the Trail is calling and Mt. Katahdin is far away.'" (WWS at 8).

So Shaffer slung the heavy, bulky Mountain Troop Rucksack to his shoulders and started off, descending the low summit of what he thought to be Mt. Oglethorpe to head north on the AT, then

passed the old cabin by the fire tower where he had spent the night as he headed north on the AT.

And several miles to the south, unseen by Shaffer, the early morning sun was illuminating the eastern side of the marble Oglethorpe Monument.

Such a scenario is, of course, historical speculation. But it is entirely consistent with what is found in the Shaffer 1948 writings – LBN and SR48 – when that record is placed upon the topography and features through which Shaffer traveled on April 3-4, 1948. It explains Shaffer's failure to note the presence of the Oglethorpe Monument and the AT sign on that summit and his focus instead on the old cabin by the fire tower in those narratives. It explains the remarkable lack of a summit photograph at Mt. Oglethorpe. It explains the apparent extraordinary mileage covered by Shaffer on the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup>.

It is found for the purposes of this Report that the record does not establish that Shaffer reached Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3, 1948. Instead, it is found that he commenced his AT hike on Sassafras Mt. on April 4, 1948, in error, believing the south summit of Sassafras Mt. to be Mt. Oglethorpe. That finding is based not on any one aspect of the record. Mere failure on the part of Shaffer to describe the summit of Oglethorpe, or even failure to take a photograph, would not in itself support a finding that he was not present on that summit. That finding is instead based on the entire available record, including what he noted (or failed to note) in his various narratives and the photographic record both as to the lack of photographic documentation of his presence on that summit on April 3-4, 1948, as well as his apparent attempts to supplement that record with later photographs.

Given the extent of Shaffer's total AT mileage not hiked in the course of his 1948 AT hike, the question of another 3.3 miles, more or less, wouldn't seem worth the effort required to sort through the complexity of Shaffer's travels, narratives and photographs on the Amicalola Ridge in 1948 and again in, presumably, 1950. But the 3.3 miles in question are the southernmost miles of the AT, and the southern terminus of the 1948 AT. To start a northbound AT hike at Sassafras Mt. in 1948 would be the equivalent of starting a southbound AT hike at the site of the Hunt Spur Lean-to, 3.12 miles south of Baxter Peak on Mt. Katahdin.<sup>13</sup>

It is a question, then, of not just 3.3 AT miles not hiked. It is a question of when Shaffer actually finished the AT hike he started on April 4, 1948. For regardless of whatever other miles of the AT Shaffer may, or may not, have hiked in 1948, if his first presence on Mt. Oglethorpe was at some date after 1948 – presumably during his 1950 trip – then it was that date on which Shaffer finally completed the AT hike he began in April 1948. And regardless of how completely, or not, Shaffer hiked the AT from Sassafras Mt. to Mt. Katahdin in 1948, if his first visit to Mt. Oglethorpe was in 1950 then the completion of Shaffer's 1948 AT hike did not actually occur until 1950.<sup>14</sup>

## **CHAPTER 17 SUMMARY**

This Report has reconstructed portions of Shaffer's 1948 hike as to what navigational decisions he made that resulted in his knowingly and voluntarily failing to hike parts of the 1948 AT, and calculated the AT mileage not hiked by Shaffer as a result of those decisions. All such calculations are based upon the record as it is presented in this Report and such assumptions and conclusions as are stated in the text.

All calculated mileages presented in this Report are, of course, only as accurate as the underlying calculations. With all the data referenced, assumptions made, and mileage calculated in this Report presented in what is intended to be a complete and transparent manner, that accuracy is readily subject to scrutiny by the same process of reconstruction of Shaffer's 1948 hike as has been presented in this Report.

As noted in the text of this Report in Chapter 12, the calculation of AT miles not hiked by Shaffer does not include AT mileage missed because of reported construction issues in two areas: the Cloverdale - Black Horse Gap section of the AT and the The Priest - Three Ridges section of the AT, both in Virginia.

The calculation of AT miles also does not include mileage apparently missed in the Snowbird Mt. area of Pisgah National Forest on April 22, 1948, since Shaffer reported trail conditions to have caused his failure to follow the AT in that area. As previously discussed in Chapter 8, the record suggests that Shaffer strayed from the AT and reported non-AT travel as "bushwhacking" along the AT, but the matter is sufficiently ambiguous to not include in a calculation of AT miles not hiked.

The below summary presents the mileage of the AT not hiked as calculated in this Report by state, then presents an overall total of the AT mileage not hiked by Shaffer from Mt. Oglethorpe to Rockfish Gap.

### **A. Mt. Oglethorpe, Georgia - Rockfish Gap, Virginia: April 4 - May 18, 1948**

This Study has addressed Shaffer's 1948 AT hike from Mt. Oglethorpe, GA, to Rockfish Gap, VA. According to the calculations stated in this Report, the total AT mileage not hiked by Shaffer during that April 4 - May 18, 1948, period was 170.31 miles, or 21.8 %, of the 769.31 total miles of the AT between those points (according to the 1940 AT mileage incorporating the Fontana Dam relocation).

Of that AT mileage not hiked, 5.5 miles were skipped by use of a motor vehicle on May 4, 1948, and an additional 18.83 miles of that mileage were skipped in part by use of a motor vehicle on May 14, 1948.

### **B. Georgia**

#### **1. Mt. Oglethorpe - Amicalola Falls State Park: April 3-4, 1948**

As discussed in Chapters 6 and 16, reconstruction of Shaffer's travels on April 3-4, 1948, and identification of the actual location of the commencement of his hike on April 4<sup>th</sup>, is made difficult by the lack of a consistent, well-documented narrative of that time period in the record of Shaffer's 1948 AT hike. What can be said is that there is no documentation in Shaffer's 1948 writings or

photographs of his presence on Mt. Oglethorpe on April 3-4, 1948. Shaffer's 1948 writings (LBN and SR48) suggest that Shaffer misidentified the southern summit of Sassafras Mt. as the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe and thereby commenced his 1948 hike in error at a point 3.3 miles north of the southern terminus of the AT.

By that error, Shaffer failed to hike the southernmost 3.3 miles of the AT, from Mt. Oglethorpe to Sassafras Mt., during his 1948 hike.

Shaffer's confusion on April 3-4, 1948, as to the location of and how to identify the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe was a direct result of his lack of information about the area. His failure to carry an AT guide, along with his failure to diligently make inquiries in the Jasper, GA, area as to the location of and route to Mt. Oglethorpe, caused him to be entirely reliant on inadequate (and perhaps inaccurate) oil company road map data and apparently confusing local advice received en route.

As discussed in Chapter 15, the available record supports a finding that Shaffer became aware of that navigational error, and his failure to reach Mt. Oglethorpe, at some point after completion of his 1948 hike. As discussed in Chapter 15, he subsequently returned to the Amicalola Ridge in an automobile trip, which probably occurred in 1950, and did visit Mt. Oglethorpe at that time to take photographs of that summit to include in the record of his 1948 hike as though those photographs were taken during that 1948 hike. Those photographs, however, displayed full-leaf foliage inconsistent with the photographs being taken in early April. One of the photographs – a slide of the AT southern terminus sign – was cropped by use of black tape to hide that image of that foliage from the viewer and that modified image was included as one of the slides in the Shaffer slide show of that 1948 hike.

## 2. Other Georgia Case Studies

This Report has presented in Chapter 7 two case studies addressing navigational decisions made by Shaffer in the course of his travel in Georgia on April 5 - 11, 1948. Those case studies included the Doublehead Gap case study, which detailed Shaffer's straying from the AT on April 5<sup>th</sup>, and the Cane Creek Gap case study, which followed Shaffer's travels on April 7<sup>th</sup> when he left the AT looking for matches. In both cases, Shaffer had left the AT, either by misdirection (in the case of the Doublehead Gap situation) or deliberately (in the case of the Cane Creek Gap situation). In both cases, Shaffer made an attempt to continue ahead in off-AT travel to intercept the AT at a point north of where he had lost or left it, thereby attempting to skip a portion of the AT.

In both of those case studies, Shaffer failed in his attempts to hike ahead by non-AT travel, and ended up back at the point he had initially left the AT. He therefore did not fail to hike any AT mileage in either of those cases. Those two case studies were included in the Study, however, to show Shaffer's early willingness to use non-AT travel to skip AT mileage when he either lost the AT and failed to backtrack to relocate it, or found it convenient when leaving the AT to obtain supplies.

In the Doublehead Gap situation, Shaffer, having lost the AT (apparently on the north slope of Springer Mt.), failed to recognize or accept his loss of the AT route as the AT markings ceased with his loss of the Trail. Rather than stopping his forward progress and backtracking to relocate the AT, Shaffer instead continued ahead, apparently assuming the AT had ceased to exist instead of recognizing his own navigational error. Having lost the AT, Shaffer continued to hike for several miles on what he knew was not the AT in the apparent belief that he would intercept the AT at some point to the north of where he had lost it. He only stopped that non-AT travel, and backtracked to the AT, when he unexpectedly intercepted a public road in the Doublehead Gap area and became aware from a local resident that he was not then traveling in a direction that would intercept the AT.

### C. North Carolina

In Chapter 8, this Report presented three case studies addressing Shaffer's failure to follow the AT in the course of his travel from his leaving Georgia and entering North Carolina (on April 11, 1948) to his entry into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park on April 15, 1948.

Two of those case studies – Rainbow Springs on April 12 - 13, 1948, and the Nantahala Gorge on April 15, 1948 – present straightforward accounts of Shaffer taking deliberate “short-cuts” causing him to fail to hike sections of the AT.

In the Rainbow Springs situation, Shaffer decided on April 13<sup>th</sup> to not return to the AT where he had left it the day before (in the Wallace Gap area) to travel by automobile to the Rainbow Springs area, but decided instead to travel a logging road to intercept the AT at a point north of where he had left it on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Based on contemporary AT data, it appears that he thereby failed to hike approximately 5.6 miles of the AT.

Shaffer's skipping of that approximate 5.6 miles of the AT in the Rainbow Springs area was the first instance found in the record of his failure to hike AT miles. While Shaffer had not been successful in his attempts to skip sections of the AT in the Doublehead Gap and Cane Creek Gap situations in Georgia, Shaffer was successful in his April 13<sup>th</sup> off-AT travel to skip a section of the AT. In the Rainbow Springs case, there was no lack of AT guide data or other confusion about the AT location involved. It was a straightforward case of Shaffer knowingly, and apparently quite casually, skipping a section of the AT by taking a short-cut out of Rainbow Springs to reach the AT north of where he had left it the day before.

In the Nantahala Gorge situation, Shaffer lost the AT on April 15<sup>th</sup> by missing the turn-off of the AT from a short section of railroad followed by the AT in that area. Having missed that turn, AT marking would, of course, disappear from the railroad right-of-way. As seen in the Doublehead Gap situation, Shaffer did not respond to the lack of AT marking by stopping his forward progress and backtracking to relocate the AT. Instead, he continued to follow the railroad with no AT markings for approximately 2 miles before finally being halted by reaching the extensive quarry operations of the Nantahala Talc and Limestone Company along the railroad at Hewitt.

Finally realizing at that point he was not on the AT, Shaffer again failed to backtrack to relocate the AT. Instead, he decided to travel straight up the side of the Gorge to intercept the AT at a point north (on the AT) of where he had lost it, a course that appeared to him to be a short-cut. While that course was shorter in distance, his off-trail bushwhack out of the Nantahala Gorge was a very difficult and dangerous course of travel that undoubtedly took him more time and effort than a backtrack to the AT and following it north would have required.

Shaffer's decision on April 15<sup>th</sup> to not backtrack to the AT where he had lost it, but instead bushwhack out of the Nantahala Gorge to intercept the AT at a point north of where he had lost it earlier that day, caused him to skip approximately 5 miles of the AT. The AT mileage skipped by that short-cut included that over Swim Bald, a notable feature of the AT in that area.

Shaffer's casual attitude about skipping AT mileage seen at Rainbow Springs is again obvious in the Nantahala Gorge situation. In both cases, Shaffer was quite cavalier about using non-AT travel to skip sections of the AT whenever he found it convenient to do so.

The other North Carolina case study in Chapter 8 – the Tapoco (Fontana Dam) study – reviewed Shaffer's narratives as to his travel, and what the record reveals to be his actual course of

travel, on April 17, 1948, as he approached the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (“GSMNP”).

In the post-war period of the 1940's, the AT was relocated from its original route along Yellow Creek Mountain that crossed the Little Tennessee River at Tapoco, then entered the GSMNP at Deals Gap. The relocation cut off the Tapoco section of the AT as well as the AT through the western end of the GSMNP by leaving Yellow Creek Mt. to cross Fontana Dam and reach the main ridge of the GSMNP at Doe Knob. That relocation – the Fontana Dam relocation – was officially in place by the time Shaffer traveled through the area on April 17, 1948.

Shaffer’s failure to follow the Fontana Dam relocation is one of the better known instances of his failure to follow the actual route of the AT on his 1948 hike. In WWS, Shaffer justified that failure by asserting that the relocated trail was not yet marked when he traveled through the area, causing him to not know about the relocation, so he followed the old AT route. When Shaffer sought recognition for his thru-hike from the ATC in November 1948, ATC Chairman Avery apparently accepted Shaffer’s explanation that he didn’t know about the Fontana Dam relocation and seemingly concluded that Shaffer’s failure to follow the new AT into the GSMNP was a result of Shaffer not carrying AT guide data.

However, a review of official ATC publications as to the Fontana Dam relocation indicates that the said relocation was in place, marked and data published by April 1948. Careful review of the entire record, including Shafer’s differing narratives of his course of travel found in LBN, SR48 and WWS as well as the photographs in the Shaffer record, indicates that Shaffer followed the relocated AT off Yellow Creek Mt. to the vicinity of the Bee Cove boat dock parking area. He then, however, left the AT to travel through Fontana Village, then regained the crest of Yellow Creek Mt., and proceeded to Tapoco (where he resupplied and checked for mail at the post office) and into the GSMNP by the old AT route. The discussion in Chapter 8 notes that Shaffer anticipated resupplying and had scheduled a mail pickup at Tapoco, and speculates that Shaffer may have left the AT and headed for Tapoco when he realized the new AT he was following wasn’t headed in that direction.

Contrary then to Shaffer’s claim in WWS that the Fontana Dam relocation was not yet marked when he traveled through the area and that he therefore did not know about it, the record indicates that Shaffer actually followed the Fontana Dam relocation for 2.18 miles from the crest of Yellow Creek Mt. to the parking area at the Bee Cove boat dock [Fontana Marina] before deciding to leave the AT to travel toward Tapoco. Given the circumstances of the AT being a brand new relocated trail and therefore undoubtedly well-marked, it appears that he knowingly left the AT at that point, apparently deciding to proceed to Tapoco instead of following the new AT route toward Fontana Dam.

By his leaving the AT in the Bee Cove area and proceeding instead to Tapoco and then into the GSMNP on the old AT route, instead of the new AT, he failed to walk the 9.01 miles of AT from the road junction at the Bee Cove parking area to Doe Knob, where the new AT route rejoined the former route.

Based on, therefore, the calculations stated in Chapter 8 of this Report, Shaffer had, during his 1948 AT hike from the time of his entry into North Carolina on April 11, 1948, to his reaching the GSMNP on April 17, 1948:

1. failed to hike on April 13, 1948, approximately 5.6 miles of the AT north of Wallace Gap, near Rainbow Springs, NC;
2. failed to hike on April 15, 1948, approximately 5 miles of the AT in the Nantahala Gorge area, near Wesser, NC; and,

3. failed to hike on April 17, 1948, 9.01 miles of the AT from the road junction near the Bee Cove parking area to Doe Knob, in the Fontana Dam area of NC.

#### **D. Tennessee**

This Study presented in Chapter 10 two case studies relating to Shaffer's travels through Tennessee during his 1948 AT hike.

The first case study addressed Shaffer's travels in the Limestone Cove area on April 27-28, 1948. As discussed, he strayed from the AT late in the afternoon of April 27<sup>th</sup>, failed to backtrack when he realized he had lost the Trail, and returned to it the next day at a point 3.59 miles north (on the AT) of where he had lost it the day before. By that diversion from the AT, Shaffer failed to hike 3.59 miles of the AT along Simerly Creek Rd. (through McKinney Gap).

The second Tennessee case study addressed Shaffer's extensive off-AT travel, and his attempt to short-cut a section of the AT, on April 28 - 29, 1948.

After rejoining the AT on Simerly Creek Rd. the morning of April 28<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer hiked the AT along Simerly Creek Rd. and U.S. 19E (west) into Hampton Tn. While the AT continued through Hampton on U.S. 19E (west), Shaffer turned off that highway onto Tn. 67 in order to find a shoe shop at which to get his boots resoled while he had lunch. After his lunch and getting his boots back, Shaffer apparently became confused as to AT location despite being aware of the route of the AT through Hampton on U.S. 19E from his road map. After his inquiries in Hampton were not helpful, Shaffer left Hampton not on U.S. 19E (west), as the AT was displayed on his road map, but rather on Tn. 67 (north), a route definitely not on the AT according to that road map.

Shaffer followed Tn. 67 for several miles before becoming aware, probably after he reached the Watauga Dam construction area, that he was not on the AT. He did not backtrack to relocate the AT in Hampton. Instead, he decided to cut across a ridge to the west (Iron Mt.) in order to intercept the AT along its map location in valley to the west across that mountain. Relying on reports of a trail across that mountain from local residents, Shaffer attempted to make his way across Iron Mt. the evening of April 28<sup>th</sup>, but failed as he could not find his way to the top of the ridge. He camped that night in rainy weather at an old cabin on the mountain, then unsuccessfully attempted to cross the mountain again the morning of April 29<sup>th</sup>. After that second failure to cross Iron Mt. to intercept the AT, he returned to Tn. 67, hitch-hiked back to Hampton, apparently found the AT without further problems, and followed the AT out of Hampton.

In his travels on April 28- 29, 1948, Shaffer again displayed his impatience with following the AT, his refusal to backtrack when he lost the AT, a quick tendency to strike out on his own route, and his confidence in his strength as a hiker and in his obstinacy to get him through challenging situations. But what is also seen is that same cavalier attitude toward skipping a part of the AT seen in his past off-AT travels. If he had been successful at crossing Iron Mt. in either of his attempts on April 28<sup>th</sup> or 29<sup>th</sup>, he would have skipped about 12 miles of the AT, depending on his exact route in crossing the mountain.

#### **E. Virginia**

1. Summary of AT Mileage not hiked by Shaffer: May 4 - May 18, 1948

As discussed in Chapter 11 of this Report, Shaffer effectively lost contact with the AT as he

left Byllesby, VA, on May 4, 1948. Instead of following, or even attempting to follow, the AT up the New River to its crossing of that river at Dixons Ferry and from there to Galax, Shaffer instead followed the N & W Railroad from Byllesby to Fries, VA, apparently under the impression that Fries was on the AT and he would relocate it there. Fries was not, however, on the AT, and even navigation by road map would have indicated that the AT went toward Galax, not Fries. Upon his arrival in Fries on the evening of May 4<sup>th</sup> in rainy weather, Shaffer became disoriented upon not finding the AT in that town. Instead of backtracking in an attempt to locate the AT, Shaffer abandoned foot travel and accepted a motor vehicle ride from Fries to Galax, thereby skipping the 5.5 miles of the AT between the railroad at Dixons Ferry and Galax.

On May 4, 1948, Shaffer therefore hiked 2.85 of the 11.55 miles of the AT between Byllesby, VA, and Galax, VA, thereby failing to hike 8.7 miles of the AT between those two points. 5.5 of those AT miles were skipped by Shaffer by motor vehicle travel from Fries to Galax on the evening of May 4, 1948.

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, Shaffer followed the AT out of Galax for 2.39 miles before leaving the AT to travel instead on Va. 97 approximately 8 miles to Pipers Gap. At Pipers Gap, he intercepted the BRP and the AT, at a point 20.68 AT miles from Galax. By that Va. 97 short-cut, Shaffer cut off a 18.29 mile section of the AT, which included the Fisher Peak area.

Shaffer reached Pipers Gap at about noon on May 5<sup>th</sup>, about 24 hours after he had left Byllesby the day before. In that 24 hour period, he had accumulated 32.23 AT miles while actually hiking only 5.24 miles (16.2%) of the AT between those two points. He had skipped 5.5 of those AT miles by transport in a motor vehicle on May 4<sup>th</sup>, and skipped by his Va. 97 short-cut to Pipers Gap on May 5<sup>th</sup> an additional 18.29 miles of that AT mileage.

Shaffer's travels from Pipers Gap to Adney Gap on May 5 - 9, 1948, were reconstructed in Chapter 12. In general, Shaffer's course of travel through that distance was focused not on the AT, but rather on the BRP, except for his following an extended (17.54 mile) section of the AT from Groundhog Mt. to U.S. 58 in May 6 - 7, 1948, except for his following the AT briefly in the Rocky Knob area and along several other short sections of the AT.

The detailed calculation of Shaffer's travels through that distance that was presented in Chapter 12 indicated that on May 5 - 9, 1948, Shaffer failed to hike a calculated 59.51 (69.3%) of the 85.82 miles of the AT between Pipers Gap and the point near Adney Gap at which the AT turned west, away from the Blue Ridge and the BRP. That overall percentage actually overstates the extent of contact Shaffer had with the AT between those points. His record of AT hiking between those points reflects his following one extended section of the AT 17.54 miles in length (from Groundhog Mt. to U.S. 58 on May 6-7), and otherwise following multiple separated, short sections of the AT scattered throughout the 85.82 mile distance while primarily following the BRP. In fact, about 60% of Shaffer's AT mileage between those points was traveled in that single 17.54 mile section between Groundhog Mt. and U.S. 58 on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

Chapter 13 followed Shaffer's travels and navigational decisions through three additional areas of particular interest in Virginia, including Ft. Lewis Mt., near Salem, Va., on May 11, 1948; Cloverdale, on U.S. 11 north of Roanoke, to Apple Orchard Mt. on May 13-14, 1948; and his route from the community of Love, Va., to Rockfish Gap on May 17-18, 1948.

After sorting through Shaffer's narratives and a study of the AT route in the area, the Ft. Lewis Mt. situation, on May 10 - 11, 1948, is seen as a fairly simple matter of Shaffer losing the AT by making a wrong turn at a trail-road intersection near the summit of Ft. Lewis Mt., then not backtracking to the AT once he realized his error when he ended up in a game refuge (now the

Havens Wildlife Management Area). Instead, he continued ahead on a non-AT route to intercept Va. 311 near Mason Cove, hitch-hiked into Salem, then returned to continue on the AT north of Va. 311. Shaffer's diversion from the AT on May 11<sup>th</sup> caused him to follow 4.14 of the 17.24 miles of the AT from Glenvar, Va., where the AT crossed U.S. 11 south of Salem, Va., to Mason Cove, where the AT crossed Va. 311, thereby failing to hike 13.1 miles of the AT between those points.

The second case study in Chapter 13 addresses Shaffer's off-AT travels on May 14, 1948, from Bearwallow Gap to Apple Orchard Mt. His travels on that day are of particular interest because his failure to hike the AT between those two points was one of the two specific instances of Shaffer not following the AT discussed by ATC Chairman Avery in his Memorandum No. 3 to the AT Board (dated November 23, 1948). The other specific instance was Shaffer's failure to follow the Fontana Dam relocation, which was discussed in Chapter 7. As in the case of the Fontana Dam relocation, Avery expressed the belief in that Memorandum that Shaffer's failure to follow the AT from Bearwallow Gap to Apple Orchard Mt. was caused by Shaffer's not having AT guidebooks.

As in the case of the Fontana Dam relocation, review of Shaffer's narratives as to May 14<sup>th</sup> makes it clear that Shaffer's failure to carry an AT guide played no role in his failure to hike the AT from Bearwallow Gap to Apple Orchard Mt. The record indicates that Shaffer was likely on the relocated AT, at a roadside spring for breakfast, in Bearwallow Gap with Ranger Jim Luck stopped to visit. Luck informed him that the AT had been relocated from its former location through the Peaks of Otter area. Shaffer therefore had two sources of information as to the location of the AT in 1948.

What caused Shaffer to not follow the AT north from Bearwallow Gap on May 14<sup>th</sup> was not a lack of knowledge as to AT location. It was instead his decision to accept a motor vehicle ride with Ranger Luck on the BRP from Bearwallow Gap to the Peaks of Otter that morning. After his visit to that mountain, and after receiving apparently welcome attention as an AT thru-hiker, Shaffer decided to not return to Bearwallow Gap to continue on the AT, but decided instead to proceed north on the BRP to intercept the AT at Apple Orchard Mt. By those navigational decisions, Shaffer skipped the entire AT from Bearwallow Gap to Apple Orchard Mt., a total distance of 18.33 miles, and traveled by motor vehicle for 4.8 miles of the BRP in the process of skipping that section of the AT.

In the course of his travel from Black Horse Gap to Bearwallow Gap on May 13 - 14, 1948, he had failed to hike 7.40 of the 7.45 miles of the AT between those points. On May 14<sup>th</sup>, he failed to hike the 18.33 miles of the AT between Bearwallow Gap and Apple Orchard Mt. on May 14, and traveled by motor vehicle 4.8 miles along the BRP in the process of skipping that section of the AT. Shaffer had therefore failed to hike 25.73 of the 25.78 miles of the AT from Black Horse Gap to Apple Orchard Mt. during his travels on May 13 - 14, 1948, and had accepted the second motor vehicle ride on his 1948 hike (the first being from Fries to Galax, Va., on May 4, 1948) that caused him to skip some part of the AT.

The third case study in Chapter 13 was that of Shaffer's travel from the community of Love to Rockfish Gap on May 18, 1948. As discussed, he had ended up following VSR 814 (Campbell's Creek Rd.) to reach the crest of the Blue Ridge and intercept the BRP near the community of Love on the morning of May 18<sup>th</sup>.

As discussed in Chapter 13, the relocated AT route was just southeast of Love, near the current Maupin Field Shelter, with a forest road (now F.S. 306) providing access to that point from the BRP near Love. Shaffer was not, however apparently looking for the AT as he reached the BRP. Instead of turning right (north) on the BRP and looking for the AT to the east (as shown on the road map), he turned left (south) on the BRP to then turn right onto the continuation of VSR 814 west

of the BRP (Love Rd.) to travel through Love and then begin to descend away from the BRP toward the Back Creek Valley and Sherando. Following roads, Shaffer ended up back on the BRP at Reeds Gap at VSR 664 (Reeds Gap Rd.). As noted, access to the AT from the BRP at Reeds Gap was obvious and convenient, with the Trail crossing VSR 664 just to the east of the BRP at that gap.

Shaffer did not, however, rejoin the AT at that point, or at any point on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Instead, he followed the BRP, and not the AT, for 13.7 miles from Reeds Gap to Rockfish Gap without apparent regard for the location of the AT. Shaffer did not therefore follow any part of the 17.43 miles of the AT from the old AT/new AT intersection near the current site of the Maupin Field Shelter to Rockfish Gap on May 18<sup>th</sup>.

Based then on the calculations stated in Chapters 11, 12 and 13 of this Report, Shaffer had, during his 1948 AT hike from his leaving Byllesby, VA, on May 4, 1948, until his arrival at Rockfish Gap, VA, on May 18, 1948,

- (a) hiked on May 4, 1948, 2.85 of the 11.55 miles of the AT between Byllesby, VA, and Galax, VA, thereby failing to hike 8.7 miles of the AT between those two points, with 5.5 of those AT miles skipped by Shaffer by motor vehicle travel from Fries to Galax on the evening of May 4, 1948;
- (b) hiked on May 5, 1948, 2.39 miles of the total 20.68 AT miles from Galax, VA, to Pipers Gap, VA, thereby failing to hike 18.29 miles of the AT between those points;
- (c) hiked on May 5 - 9, 1948, a calculated 24.76 of the 85.82 miles of the AT between Pipers Gap, VA, and the point near Adney Gap, VA, at which the AT turned west, away from the Blue Ridge and the BRP, thereby failing to hike a calculated 61.06 miles of the AT between those points;
- (d) hiked on May 11, 1948, 4.14 of the 17.24 miles of the AT from Glenvar, VA, where the AT crossed U.S. 11 south of Salem, VA, to Mason Cove, where the AT crossed Va. 311, thereby failing to hike 13.1 miles of the AT between those points;
- (e) hiked on May 13 - 14, 1948, .05 of the 7.45 miles of the AT between Black Horse Gap, VA, and Bearwallow Gap, VA, thereby failing to hike 7.40 miles of the AT between those points;
- (f) failed to hike on May 14, 1948, the 18.33 miles of the AT between Bearwallow Gap, VA, and Apple Orchard Mt., VA, with him traveling in a motor vehicle 4.8 miles along the BRP in the process of skipping that section of the AT; and,
- (f) failed to hike on May 18, 1948, any of the 17.43 mile section of the AT from the intersection of the old and new AT routes, near Love, to Rockfish Gap.

Between May 4 and May 18, 1948, Shaffer therefore failed to hike a calculated 144.31 miles (48.0%) of the total 1948 AT distance of 300.39 miles (1950 Guide) from Byllesby to Rockfish Gap, with Shaffer traveling in a motor vehicle on two occasions (May 4<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>) in the process of skipping sections of the AT.

## 2. Of roads and highways on Shaffer's travel through Virginia

When Shaffer was asked about AT conditions during his interview for the May 20, 1948, *News-Virginian* article, he noted that “[a]bout 20 per cent of the trail is on roads.” When asked about what part of the road he walked on, he replied “off the hard surface, its easier on my feet.” That answer is significant that because it reflects, to a great extent, the many miles of Shaffer's travel on hard surface highways during his 1948 hike between Byllesby and Rockfish Gap, Va.

In the late 1940's, very few Virginia secondary roads were paved. What was paved were most state highways and federal routes. From a review of the 1947 Esso road map of Virginia (VA/WV/MD/ DE), it appears that Va. 89, Va. 94, Va. 97, U.S. 58, and the BRP through southern Virginia were paved in 1948. The BRP between Black Horse Gap and Bearwallow Gap had not, however, apparently been paved by 1948, and some portion of the BRP north of Bearwallow Gap may also have been unpaved at that time. Those BRP miles will be counted, though, as paved highway miles because of the nature of that highway.

While extensive portions of the 1948 AT through southern Virginia followed public roads, that “road walking” was almost entirely on unpaved secondary roads, not paved state or federal highways or the BRP. The 1948 AT generally followed such paved state and federal highways for only short distances. The 1950 Guide noted those short distances as “offsets.” A hiker traveling the 1948 AT would therefore have had very limited experience walking such paved highways.

Shaffer, in contrast, had extensively followed such paved highways during his travel from Byllesby to Rockfish Gap on May 4 - 18, 1948. His paved highway experience through Virginia had included:

- (a) approximately 12 miles on Va. 94 and U.S. 58 from Fries to Galax on May 4<sup>th</sup> as Shaffer accepted a motor vehicle ride that caused him to fail to hike the 5.5 miles of the AT between the railroad at Dixons Ferry and Galax;
- (b) approximately 10.5 miles on Va. 89 and 97 on May 5<sup>th</sup>;
- (c) the BRP and Va. 8 for approximately 50 miles during his travels on May 5 - 9, 1948, from Pipers Gap to the point near Adney Gap at which the AT turned west, away from the Blue Ridge and the BRP;
- (d) the BRP for 21.2 miles, including 6.6 miles between Black Horse Gap and Bearwallow Gap, and 14.6 miles between Bearwallow Gap and the Upper Blue Ridge Parkway Crossing of the AT at Apple Orchard Mt., on May 13-14, 1948, with 4.8 miles of that mileage traveled by motor vehicle; and,
- (e) 13.7 miles on the BRP on May 18<sup>th</sup>, while skipping the 16.0 miles of AT between Reeds Gap and Rockfish Gap.

Shaffer had therefore traveled approximately 107.29 miles – over one hundred miles – on paved highways, with approximately 16.8 miles of that distance by motor vehicle while skipping parts of the AT, between his leaving Byllesby on May 4<sup>th</sup> and his arrival at Rockfish Gap on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Of that 107.29 miles of paved highway travel, Shaffer traveled 84.9 miles of the BRP in the course of his AT hike on May 5 - 19, 1948.

In that same distance, the longest stretch of AT on paved highways was the 2.39 miles of Va. 97 and Va. 89 followed in the Galax area, and the total AT mileage on paved highways (apart from

the BRP) between Byllesby and Rockfish Gap was 4.5 miles, and the AT followed the BRP between those points for a total distance of 2.06 miles between those points, with the longest stretch followed a 0.8 mile section north of Tuggle Gap. The total distance of paved highway – including state and federal highways and the BRP – followed by the AT between Byllesby and Rockfish Gap in 1948 was therefore 6.56 miles of the total 300.39 AT miles between those points.

Given the character of the “road-walking” on the AT through Virginia in 1948, a hiker who had followed the AT through that area that year who was asked the *News-Virginian* question as to “what part of the road he walked on” when the AT followed roads would have probably responded that there was only one “part” to those roads – only a dirt or gravel surface on a generally narrow rural road. Such an AT hiker would have had little or no experience (6.56 miles) walking on paved surfaces or grassy shoulders on the roads traveled by the AT between Byllesby and Rockfish Gap.

Shaffer, in contrast, had very extensive experience (over one hundred miles) traveling such paved highways between Byllesby and Rockfish Gap when he was interviewed for the *News-Virginian* article on May 19<sup>th</sup>. That extensive non-AT paved highway experience, rather than the AT experience of unpaved road travel, is reflected in Shaffer’s comment to the *News-Virginian* interviewer that when walking roads, he preferred walking “off the hard surface, its easier on my feet.”

## CHAPTER 18 AN “EQUIVALENT HIKE”

The focus of this Report is the AT from Mt. Oglethorpe, Ga., to Rockfish Gap, Va., because the genesis of this project was the longtime interest of the author in the AT south of the Shenandoah National Park. Shaffer’s 1948 hike became a matter of inquiry only as a result of interest in that part of the AT, and in particular the “old AT” – the sections of the AT of the 1930's and 40's that were subsequently abandoned in the process of relocation of the AT in later decades. So as the record of Shaffer’s hike extends north of Rockfish Gap, it leaves the area of particular interest of the author of this Report.

In, however, concluding this report, review of one additional navigation decision of Shaffer north of Rockfish Gap, and within the Shenandoah National Park, may be useful because of the inferences that might be made from the events of that day. A brief review of the relevant events of May 21, 1948, will therefore be included as the final case study from the Virginia portion of the 1948 AT.

As Shaffer hiked into Swift Run Gap on May 21, 1948, he found waiting for him District Ranger Hopper. Shaffer had met Hopper the day before, at Simmons Gap. He had heard of Shaffer from Ranger Pete Johnson, who had met Shaffer at Rockfish Gap on the 19<sup>th</sup> to give him his campfire permit for the Shenandoah National Park.

Ranger Hopper had brought Shaffer a copy of the May 20, 1948, Waynesboro *News-Virginian* with the article about Shaffer that had been written from the May 19<sup>th</sup> interview. Shaffer read it over a free breakfast provided by the manager of the Swift Run Tavern, after he was introduced by Hopper. Shaffer was definitely no longer an anonymous, or an unnoticed, AT hiker. And the benefits to being the inchoate first AT thru-hiker were nice - - a free breakfast.

He left Swift Run Gap, headed north, already enjoying the role of the first AT thru-hiker, with only a hike to Maine between him and firming up that identity.

Late that afternoon, after he had passed Bear Fence Shelter (WWS at 71) a thunderstorm struck with “unusual fury.” As heavy rain fell on the AT, Shaffer crossed the Conway River Road at Bootens Gap, 11.64 miles from Swift Run Gap. There, as the rain fell, Shaffer looked to his left and saw, 50yds. away, the Skyline Drive running parallel to the AT.

In Shaffer’s pack, presumably, was the May 20, 1948, issue of the Waynesboro *News-Virginian* article about Earl Shaffer, AT thru-hiker. As it reported, he was hiking the AT with the intention of becoming the first AT thru-hiker. Earlier that day, he had enjoyed and benefitted from his recognition as the first AT thru-hiker.

The AT led ahead, to Maine. Shaffer was an AT thru-hiker – to be the first of record. But it was raining. The brush along the AT was wet. So Shaffer turned left, walked off the AT, then turned right to walk the Skyline Drive in order to “. . . stay out of the wet brush” (WWS at 71, SR48). He walked the Skyline Drive to the AT crossing just south of Milan Gap, where he rejoined the AT in fairer weather.

He had now skipped 3.05 more AT miles,<sup>1</sup> but by walking in this case not the Blue Ridge Parkway he had so often followed south of Rockfish Gap, but the Skyline Drive in the Shenandoah National Park. And his reason for doing so was to “. . . stay out of the wet brush.”

It is a striking image: Earl V. Shaffer, on his way to recognition as the first AT thru-hiker, walking along the Skyline Drive on May 21, 1948, while skipping a 3.05 mile section of the AT because he didn't wish to walk in the wet brush along the AT – skipping another section of the AT that day with the same casual attitude he had displayed on May 8<sup>th</sup>, near Tuggle Gap, when he abandoned walking the AT along on unpaved VSR 709 in favor of the grassy shoulders of the paved BRP because he found it “easier walking on grass along Pwy” (LBN at 54). And in his pack as he walked the Skyline Drive on May 21<sup>st</sup> was, presumably, the *May 20, 1948, News-Virginian* article featuring an interview with him as a thru-hiker.

What appears to be pervasive in the record of Shaffer's 1948 hike is that casual, even cavalier, attitude on his part about skipping sections of the AT. From his planning of his trip in late 1947 and early 1948 through his arrival at Rockfish Gap on May 18, 1948, and then once more between Bootens Gap and Milan Gap on May 21<sup>st</sup>, Shaffer seemed satisfied with merely following the general route of the AT. When he found it inconvenient to follow the AT, he made his own way by non-AT travel with little apparent concern as to AT miles missed. What is remarkable is that he apparently felt no contradiction in his repeatedly identifying himself as an AT thru-hiker even while traveling the BRP instead of the AT.

Perhaps the most striking example of Shaffer's boldness in skipping sections of the AT while representing himself to be an AT thru-hiker is seen in his casual skipping of the entire AT section from Bearwallow Gap to Apple Orchard Mt. on May 14<sup>th</sup>, including acceptance of a motor vehicle ride, even while presenting himself to Ranger Luck, Professor Freer, and the Lynchburg College class as an AT thru-hiker. However Shaffer might have represented himself on May 14, 1948, he was not on that day engaged in hiking the AT.

Shaffer's interview with the editor of the Waynesboro *News-Virginian* on May 19<sup>th</sup> was nearly as bold as Shaffer's BRP travel after his Peaks of Otter visit. As previously discussed, as Shaffer set down for that interview as an AT thru-hiker, he had not been on the AT since the 17<sup>th</sup>. He had traveled secondary roads and the BRP throughout the day on the 18<sup>th</sup> with no apparent interest in locating or following the nearby AT. In fact, neither LBN nor SR48 even mention the Trail in the narratives of May 18<sup>th</sup>. Even his photograph that ran with the article on May 20<sup>th</sup> show Shaffer apparently not on the AT, but instead on the Skyline Drive. Yet the contradiction between his representing himself to be an AT thru-hiker even while engaged in extensive off-AT travel did not appear to cause Shaffer any concern.

During Shaffer's 1948 journey through Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee, he was an anonymous hiker traveling in virtual obscurity. As he traveled through Virginia, however, he began to be identified as a thru-hiker as BRP personnel he came into contact with (such as Ranger William Lord) passed word of his journey along through BRP communication channels. Ironically, he came into contact with Lord and other BRP personnel only because he was traveling that highway instead of the AT. As discussed in Chapter 13, by the time he met Ranger Jim Luck at Bearwallow Gap he was no longer anonymous. His meeting that day Professor Freer and the Lynchburg College Class at the Peaks of Otter brought him as a thru-hiker into contact with not only a group of admiring students, but with Freer, who was then the President of the Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club. At Waynesboro, on May 19<sup>th</sup>, he had what was apparently his first newspaper interview (in the *News-Virginian*) as a thru-hiker.

As Shaffer hiked north from Rockfish Gap, he knew he was no longer anonymous. He had now been identified as a thru-hiker through both BRP and ATC channels. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 13, there is a strong indication in the record that he followed the Skyline Drive, not the AT, out of Rockfish Gap. And it is an undisputable matter of record, as discussed above, that Shaffer casually skipped another 3.05 miles of the AT on May 21, 1948 (with the May 20<sup>th</sup> *News-Virginian*

article featuring him as an AT thru-hiker presumably in his pack) by hiking instead the Skyline Drive from Bootens Gap to Milan Gap – for no reason more pressing than to “. . . stay out of the wet brush.”

The term “white-blazer” is used to describe an AT hiker who is “particular” about walking every foot of the AT – a “purist.” It is obvious from the record that Shaffer did not have a “purist” or “white-blazer” attitude during his 1948 hike up to May 21, 1948. He accepted motor vehicle rides that caused him to skip AT mileage. He very casually took, or attempted to take, a number of short-cuts. In the Fontana area, he left the AT to make his own way through Topoca. Through Virginia, he repeatedly chose to walk highways, including extensive mileage of the BRP, instead of the AT. And even after all the attention and recognition as a thru-hiker that he received as he reached Rockfish Gap, he remained apparently quite casual about skipping a section of the AT on May 21<sup>st</sup> by again walking a highway (the Skyline Drive).

One has to conclude from Shaffer’s casual attitude about skipping AT sections that he must have had a thru-hiking ethos that made him comfortable with navigational decisions that often involved not following the AT. His apparent comfort with the contradiction of claiming to be a thru-hiker while not really following the AT seemed to arise out of what might be termed Shaffer’s “equivalent hike” rationalization.

That “equivalent hike” rationalization is clearly seen in the discussion in Chapter 11 of Shaffer’s justification for accepting the motor vehicle ride from Fries to Galax on May 4<sup>th</sup>. As he wrote in the WWS Draft cited in Chapter 11, his acceptance of that motor vehicle ride to Galax, and the skipping of 5.5 miles of AT by that “hitching,” was justified by the fact that he had walked extra miles that day in the course of straying off the AT and being unable to relocate it. Such an “equivalent hike” rationalization would explain much of Shaffer’s non-AT travel as by such a rationalization he felt it unnecessary to actually follow the AT if he felt the non-AT route he was following was equivalent to the AT route. By internalization of that “equivalent hike” rationalization, Shaffer apparently felt all he had to do to claim to be a thru-hiker was to hike what he believed to be an “equivalent hike” to the AT route. That would explain why Shaffer was apparently so relaxed about not following the AT while claiming to be a thru-hiker – to his point of view, his non-AT travel was the “equivalent” of following the AT.

While obviously comfortable within his personal thru-hiker ethos with extensive non-AT travel while claiming to be a thru-hiker, Shaffer was apparently not confident enough that others would share his point of view to freely disclose it. As previously discussed, Shaffer’s report to the ATC in SR48 was much more ambiguous and guarded as to non-AT (and motor vehicle) travel than was that in LBN or WWS. While SR48 was submitted to the ATC in 1948, LBN was apparently never made public and WWS was not published until decades after the 1948 hike.

Shaffer’s hesitation about disclosing the full extent of his non-AT travel was also seen in his reaction to being asked in the course of his May 19, 1948, *News-Virginian* interview what he had written in LBN about his previous day’s (May 18<sup>th</sup>) travels. As discussed in Chapter 13, Shaffer’s reaction to that request suggested that no matter how comfortable he felt in walking secondary roads and the BRP, instead of the AT, on May 19<sup>th</sup>, he was prepared to read his entries for that day to the interviewer and thereby disclose his failure to follow the AT.

While not displaying a “purist” attitude toward rigorously following the AT in the course of his 1948 AT hike, Shaffer was not hesitant about adopting such an attitude when commenting on such “short-cuts” he believed other reported thru-hikers had taken. In a December 27, 1955, letter to a Richard Lockey (copy found in NMAH Box 3, Folder 7) discussing AT thru-hikers, Shaffer stated his personal opinion that

Martin Papendick (of Michigan) supposedly did it [thru-hike the AT] but not too meticulously (taking some shortcuts, etc.). Mrs. Gatewood supposedly did it this past summer but I suspect her trip was similar to Martin's.

In a November 11, 1998, letter to Gene Espy written after his 1998 AT hike,<sup>2</sup> Shaffer implied such a "purist" attitude in his hiking ethos when he observed that many thru-hikers skipped difficult sections of the AT that, by implication, Shaffer had traveled. In that letter, he commented that

Very few of the thru hikers actually are "purists." Most bypass some of the worse stretches. I don't blame them. I fell many times and was lucky to escape serious injury. I believe and tell people I have a guardian angel.

Such statements by Shaffer served to buttress his reputation, and eventually his legendary status, as a "purist" hiker. The actual record of his 1948 hike as reviewed in this Report suggests, however, that Shaffer did not conduct that hike "too meticulously" as to actually following the AT, and that he himself took "some shortcuts, etc." – including a couple of motor vehicle rides – in the course of that hike. His hiking ethos from Georgia to Rockfish Gap in 1948 would certainly not place him in the category of one of those "very few . . . purists" he mentioned in his 1998 letter to Espy. To the contrary, Shaffer appeared to follow instead a subjective "equivalent hike" philosophy as to his following, or choosing to not follow, the AT in the course of that portion of his 1948 hike. If, then, Shaffer had such a "white-blazer" attitude when those cited letters were written in 1955 and 1998, he apparently adopted such an ethos in terms of his own AT hiking sometime later than May 21, 1948, and somewhere further north on his 1948 AT hike than Milan Gap in the Shenandoah National Park.

## CHAPTER 19 A CONCLUSION

The phrase “The Conclusion” is probably not appropriate for the end of this Report. At the end, much is left to yet be determined. From identification of the actual date and true source of the slide of the Oglethorpe Monument to determination of the exact location of the “Skyline Drive” sign Shaffer is seen walking past at Rockfish Gap on May 19<sup>th</sup> in the May 20, 1948, Waynesboro *News-Virginian* photograph, the reconstruction of Shaffer’s 1948 hike presented in this Report has left a number of “loose ends” of unfinished research from Mt. Oglethorpe to Rockfish Gap. This Report ends, therefore, not with the definite sense of “The Conclusion,” but rather with the less definite title of “A Conclusion.”

This Report has ended up being an audit of Shaffer’s 1948 hike as the AT mileage hiked, or not hiked, by Shaffer during his 1948 AT hike has been cumulatively calculated. The mileage figures presented are only as accurate, of course, as the findings as to Shaffer’s actual course of travel and the 1948 AT data available to the author, and such accuracy is further subject to the mathematical errors that have likely eluded the author’s best efforts at checking all the numbers. Despite similar best efforts to carefully note and cite sources, the complicated factual nature of this Report suggests that the reader will undoubtedly also find factual or typographical errors.

Despite all those yet-to-be-researched “loose ends” and likely errors this Report is sufficiently complete to present as “A Conclusion” – a tentative reconstruction of the 1948 Shaffer hike. As a detailed study of Shaffer’s 1948 hike, it is intended as no more than a framework for additional research and discussion for those with an interest in the old AT and early reported AT thru-hikers. Since there has been a determined effort to be entirely transparent as to findings and calculations, it should not be a complicated task in the course of such a discussion that for a reviewer to replicate the study and calculations.

Of the many questions remaining at the conclusion of this Report, the obvious one left to be addressed is whether Earl V. Shaffer was actually the first person to report a thru-hike during which he walked the entire Trail from Georgia to Maine? Given the record of his hike as discussed in this Report, should Shaffer have received, and should he continue to receive, recognition as an AT thru-hiker for his 1948 hike – or, in particular, as the first AT thru-hiker of record?

That is not a question addressed by this Report. Instead, it was a question of policy for the ATC in 1948, and continues to be a question of policy for the ATC and for the AT community today. The question of who is recognized as the first thru-hiker of record of the AT is not therefore a question of the completeness of the hike. It is instead a question of whom that community, and the ATC, chooses to receive that recognition.

But such recognition doesn’t change the record of a hike as a thru-hike. Regardless of such recognition, did Shaffer actually travel on foot the entire AT from Mt. Oglethorpe, GA, to Rockfish Gap, VA, in 1948? While the question of recognition is purely a policy matter – in essence, a political question – for the ATC and AT community, the question of whether Shaffer actually hiked the AT in 1948 is a factual matter.

Did Shaffer journey over the entire AT between those points on foot? The answer is: No, he did not. As discussed in Chapters 11 and 13, while Shaffer’s report to the ATC in SR48 presented his acceptance of motor vehicle rides on May 4 and May 14, 1948, with sufficient ambiguity to not be immediately recognizable as motor vehicle rides that had the effect of causing him to skip AT

miles, his narratives in LBN and WWS make it clear that he did, in fact, accept two such rides. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, he was transported in a motor vehicle from Fires, Va., to Galax, Va., thereby skipping 5.5 miles of the AT. On May 14<sup>th</sup>, he was transported in a motor vehicle from Bearwallow Gap to the Peaks of Otter in the process of skipping 18.83 miles of the AT.

That is the factual record as found in this Report. The recognition issue is then – and it is an issue of AT community standards – is whether Shaffer’s failure to travel “on foot” along the AT in the course of being transported by motor vehicles on those two occasions would deem him as not having, in fact, having journeyed along the AT in 1948 “on foot.”

Did Shaffer journey continuously over the AT between Mt. Oglethorpe and Rockfish Gap in 1948? The calculations in this Report indicate that the total AT mileage not hiked by Shaffer between Mt. Oglethorpe, Ga, and Rockfish Gap, Va., during the April 4 - May 18, 1948, period was 170.31 miles, or 21.8 %, of the 769.31 total miles of the AT between those points. The Summary presented in Chapter 17 reviewed the calculations supporting those findings.

It is again a question of AT community standards. Does a hike of the AT that featured the degree of skipped AT mileage seen in Shaffer’s 1948 hike meet the standards of that community for an AT thru-hike? In the particular circumstances of Shaffer’s hike, does it meet the standards of that community as to the first thru-hike of record of the AT?

A comment sometimes heard is that while Shaffer may have “missed a few blazes” in the course of his 1948 AT hike, those few missed blazes are no reason to question the completeness of that hike. To put, however, that “missed a few blazes” comment as to Shaffer’s non-AT travel in the context of his actual non-AT travel in 1948 from Mt. Oglethorpe to Rockfish Gap, Shaffer failing to hike 170.31 miles of that 769.31 mile AT distance would translate by modern blazing standards into missing 12,884 of the 58,198 AT blazes in such a distance (based on the ATC estimate of 165,000 blazes in the current 2,181 miles of the AT or 75.65 blazes per mile<sup>1</sup>).

In WWS (at 60), Shaffer described counting his steps as he hiked and calculating how many steps it would take to hike the entire AT. He estimated the number of “straight ahead” steps required to be five million. Shaffer reported in WWS making that calculation as he traveled between Tuggle Gap and Smart View Recreation Area on May 8, 1948. What is ironic is that the said calculation of the number of steps required to hike the AT was done not while Shaffer was hiking the AT, but instead as he walked along the BRP because of his observation that the grass shoulders of the BRP were more comfortable for walking than the unpaved secondary roads followed by the AT (LBN at 54). He was able to do that calculation because of the mile markers along the BRP. The ATC also states that estimate of steps required to hike the entire AT.<sup>2</sup>

Based on the official AT distance of 2,050 miles in 1948, that estimate of 5,000,000 steps translates to 2,439 steps per mile. Shaffer’s failing to hike 170.31 miles of the 769.31 miles of the AT distance between Mt. Oglethorpe and Rockfish Gap would therefore translate into his missing 415,386 steps of the 1,876,347 steps required to travel the AT through such a distance.

Approximately 12,884 AT blazes and 415,386 steps along the AT missed on Shaffer’s way to Rockfish Gap – and, then, on May 21, 1948, another 231 AT blazes and 7,439 steps on the AT missed as Shaffer walked the Skyline Drive instead of the AT from Bootens Gap to Milan Gap.

Is an AT hike that skipped that percentage of AT mileage a thru-hike? Again, that is not a question of fact. It is a question of whether such a hike meets AT community standards as a thru-hike – or, in the case of Shaffer’s 1948 hike, the first AT thru-hike of record.

What can be factually said is that if the question is when an AT thru-hiker of record first traveled on foot, without motor vehicle assistance along the course of travel, from Georgia to Maine, the answer is that it was not in the course of Shaffer's 1948 hike. If the question is when an AT thru-hiker of record first hiked the sections of AT skipped by Shaffer during his 1948 hike, the factual answer is that it was not in the course of Shaffer's 1948 hike. For each of the 170.31 AT miles skipped by Shaffer in 1948, and for the features along those miles of the AT he failed to hike, official or community recognition of Shaffer's hike doesn't change the fact that inclusion of those miles and features in a thru-hike of record did not occur during Shaffer's 1948 hike.

Shaffer's report of his 1948 AT hike could offer no narrative of his walking those sections of the AT because he did not follow the AT through those areas. Shaffer had no AT experience through those "skipped" areas because he did not travel the AT. Instead, he took short-cuts, made his own way, accepted motor vehicle rides, and walked highways – and in particular, walked the Blue Ridge Parkway. What Shaffer offered instead of a narrative relating his hike along the entire AT was reasons, justifications, explanations, and excuses for his repeated and pervasive failures to follow the AT during his 1948 hike from Georgia to Rockfish Gap.

Shaffer therefore offered no report to the ATC that he walked the entire Trail from Georgia to Maine in the course of his 1948 hike. Instead, he offered in SR48 and, later, in WWS a wide range of explanations, rationalizations, and anecdotal excuses for his failure to hike substantial portions of that Trail through the South. Through a complete review of the Shaffer record as presented in this Report, the full extent and circumstances of his non-AT travel can now be described and calculated. His narratives are replete with his assertions that any failure of his to follow the AT was not his responsibility – instead, it was a result of his lack of guides because of ATC or post office error, or the failure of those responsible for the AT to properly maintain or mark it, or the extreme weather of 1948, or the rough walking surface on Virginia secondary roads that caused him to divert his travel to the grass shoulders of the BRP, or the wet brush along the AT north of Bootens Gap in the Shenandoah National Park that caused him to divert his travels to the Skyline Drive, or whatever other reason or rationale Shaffer might have felt justified his following the course of his "equivalent hike" instead of the AT.

The ATC, acting on only the limited narrative of Shaffer's hike presented in SR48, accepted his 1948 hike as a thru-hike – the first thru-hike of record – even though it was known at the time that Shaffer did not, in fact, follow the entire AT during that hike. Acting pursuant to Chairman Avery's strong suggestion that Shaffer's hike be afforded that recognition despite Shaffer's failure to hike the entire AT, it is therefore apparent that Shaffer's explanations, rationalizations and excuses for his failure to hike the entire AT were accepted by the ATC at that time. In effect, therefore, the ATC apparently accepted Shaffer's assertion that he completed in the course of his 1948 hike an "equivalent hike" to one that actually followed the AT.

Beginning with that ATC recognition of Shaffer's hike as the first thru-hike of record in 1948, through several decades of Shaffer telling and retelling the story of his 1948 hike in his slide presentations, and finally through publication of WWS in the 1980's, Shaffer's "bushwhacking" his way north following as he could a virtually nonexistent 1948 AT became a matter of universal acceptance in the AT community.

How did the AT community know that any failure of Shaffer to follow the AT was, in fact, not his responsibility but instead the fault or result of all the various causes cited by Shaffer for such failures on his part? The primary source of information about the actual state of existence of the 1948 AT and the actual circumstances of Shaffer's skipping AT sections was, in fact, Shaffer. Since he controlled, and apparently severely limited, access to LBN and his photographs, and since nobody else who might have known about AT trail conditions during the late 1940's, apparently came forward

to dispute Shaffer's reports as to his hike and AT conditions in that year, Shaffer was able to present his "equivalent hike" as the "best" that could have been done under the circumstances.

Shaffer was therefore completely successful in accomplishing the goal of his 1948 hike. He gained recognition as the first AT thru-hiker of record. His 1948 hike became legendary in the AT community. But what underlaid that legend was not a hike that actually followed the entire 1948 AT. It was, instead, the route that Shaffer actually followed in 1948 on foot, and by motor vehicle, that he believed to be "equivalent" to a hike that actually followed the AT.

With Shaffer's death in 2002 and the subsequent donation of his papers to the NMAH, it became possible to reconstruct that 1948 hike as it actually occurred, rather than how Shaffer presented it. It therefore became possible to look beneath the legend and anecdotes of Shaffer's 1948 "equivalent hike" of the AT to view the reality of that hike and the 1948 AT. This Report presents what that record establishes to be that reality of Shaffer's 1948 hike.

So the question is not whether Shaffer hiked the entire AT during his 1948 AT thru-hike. It is undisputed that he did not. The question is instead whether the journey he did take in 1948 was, as he believed, an "equivalent hike" to one actually following the AT as it then existed. Unlike Chairman Avery and the ATC in 1948, or the AT community through the many decades of Shaffer's life, the modern student of the old AT and Shaffer's reported 1948 thru-hike has access to the Shaffer writings and photographs now accessible at the NMAH to address that question of the "equivalency" of Shaffer's 1948 hike to a hike that actually followed the AT.

Since Shaffer voluntarily skipped such a substantial portion of the AT in the South, and particularly in Virginia, in 1948, his hike can be accepted as a thru-hike only by acceptance of his attitude that he hiked an "equivalent" hike to one actually following the AT. What constitutes such an "equivalent" hike is a matter of community standards and ATC policy, and is therefore beyond the scope of this Report.

Given the new information now available about the true nature of Shaffer's 1948 hike, should the question of certification of that hike as the first thru-hike be revisited? From Shaffer's own point of view, revisiting the question of a previously listed "high-profile" thru-hike would seem entirely appropriate. In fact, Shaffer personally requested that the ATC remove the name of a previously listed thru-hiker whose hike is of considerable public interest. According to December 2000 ATC correspondence found in the NMAH Shaffer collection, Shaffer sought removal of the name of Max Gordon<sup>3</sup> from the ATC "2,000-miler registry" once and, when the ATC Board of Managers refused to do so, renewed his request a second time. The Board refused that second request as well. By that precedent, Shaffer's 1948 hike could appropriately be subject to the same reexamination that he requested of the 1936 Gordon hike.

This Report necessarily raises such questions, but it is beyond its scope to suggest answers. As a matter of policy and community standards, the answer to the question of who is recognized as the first thru-hiker by the ATC and the AT community may well be a very different answer to the question of who was the first AT thru-hiker of record who actually traveled the entire AT by foot in one continuous journey.

This Report is focused on the question of the reality of Shaffer's 1948 hike, rather than the policy decisions that caused it to be recognized it as the first thru-hike of record. As noted in Chapter 1, the genesis of this Report was the author's longtime interest in the "lost" sections of the original Appalachian Trail through the South and his wishing to use the first AT thru-hike through southern Virginia as the basis to travel that "lost" AT. For purposes of this Report, it is sufficient to conclude that the 1948 AT hike of Earl Shaffer is not useful for that purpose because of his failing to hike

substantial portions of the AT through Virginia. In fact, it is not an overstatement to suggest that the record – his narratives as well as his photographs – of Shaffer’s 1948 hike from Pipers Gap to Adney Gap (May 5 - 9, 1948), from Black Horse Gap to Apple Orchard Mt. (May 13 -14, 1948), and from Love to Rockfish Gap (May 18, 1948) is much more useful for documenting the Blue Ridge Parkway in that year than it is for AT research.

As noted, this Report is not “The Conclusion” as to a detailed study of Shaffer’s 1948 hike. However, the factual findings of this Report are sufficient to support “A Conclusion” that however Shaffer’s 1948 hike might be officially recognized by the ATC or viewed by the AT community, it is not a useful tool for study of the actual route and features of substantial portions of the 1948 AT through the South (and particularly through southern Virginia) because of his substantial failure to actually hike that Trail during that journey.

The author did not set out to “disprove” or challenge any record hike of the AT. Instead, his long-time interest – an interest reaching far further back in the author’s history than any awareness of the identity of any reported AT thru-hiker – was in finding and following the old, “lost” AT through southern Virginia. Researching and retracing the first AT thru-hike through that area was a natural outgrowth of that interest in the old AT. The focus of interest was not, then, that some hiker claimed a “record,” but instead it was that a record of that hike existed that could be studied and reconstructed. That is what made the record of Shaffer’s 1948 hike of interest – it was recognized by the ATC and the AT community as the first AT thru-hike with a record. It is that record that should have provided the “footsteps” to follow on an historical journey along the route of the old AT.

Shaffer may be recognized by the ATC as the first AT thru-hiker of record, he may be an iconic figure in AT history, and he may be a legend in the AT community. Regardless of such recognition, honors or stature, the factual finding of this Report is that to follow the 1948 “footsteps” of Earl Shaffer through southern Virginia is, to a substantial degree, not to follow the 1948 AT. To a substantial degree, it is instead to follow the N & W Railroad from Byllesby to Fries, and Va. 97 from Galax to Pipers Gap. It is, to a substantial degree, to follow the BRP from Pipers Gap to Adney Gap, from Bearwallow Gap to Apple Orchard Mt., and from Love to Rockfish Gap. And to follow his 1948 travels from Fries to Galax, or from Bearwallow Gap to Apple Orchard Mt., would require not following “footsteps” at all, but instead travel in a motor vehicle. Such a record of travel is of considerable historical interest, but little practical use, to planning a journey along the old AT through Virginia.

Where, then, does that leave the author’s interest in a journey to retrace the travel of the first AT thru-hiker along the old AT through the Blue Ridge of Virginia? With Shaffer’s 1948 hike deemed unsuitable for such a purpose, it is necessary to move beyond that hike, this Report, and 1948, to identify an AT thru-hike that can serve as the historical basis for an exploration of the old AT through that area – which means moving beyond this study of the 1948 Shaffer to a new project focused on that later thru-hike.

The focus of that new project is, then, the first AT thru-hike of record to have actually traveled the old AT through that area. According to the available record, that hike is the 1951 thru-hike of Eugene S. Espy. As the days from July 2 through July 17, 2011, pass, each will mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the successive days of Gene Espy’s 1951 AT thru-hike from Byllesby to Rockfish Gap. His 1951 thru-hike through Virginia, like his entire AT hike, is easily followed by the record of overnight stops apparently prepared for his 1951 report to the ATC, and which has been published at least three times since (most recently in his 2008 book The Trail Of My Life: The Gene Espy Story). According to that account, Espy left Byllesby on the morning of July 2, 1951, and passed through Rockfish Gap on July 17, 1951.

It is the author's intention to retrace in 2011 selected portions of Espy's 1951 hike on the respective 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of each respective day's travel in 1951. The route followed will be revised to incorporate modern trails when available as substitutes for the secondary roads followed by the old AT, or to detour the few areas of the old AT on private property where access may not be available. Travel will be both by foot and bicycle. The general guide for each day's travel will be the 1950 Guide To Paths In The Blue Ridge, supplemented by modern maps. Beyond leaving Byllesby on July 2<sup>nd</sup> and arriving at Rockfish Gap on July 17<sup>th</sup>, and generally following the schedule of Espy's 1951 hike, the itinerary of the July 2 - 17, 2011, travel is still in the planning stages.

Like the research for and preparation of this Report, the research for and the planning of that travel on the old AT across the New River valley and along the Blue Ridge in July 2011 is an entirely personal matter of interest to the author. But just as this Report is being distributed on a limited basis to individuals and groups that might have a particular interest in the subject matter, an invitation is similarly extended to anyone who might be interested in joining with the author in the research, planning, and travel of a July 2011 journey along that "lost AT" route in the footsteps of the first AT thru-hiker of record known to have done so – Gene Espy, in 1951.

For more information, contact:

Jim McNeely  
P.O. Box 667  
Peterstown, WV 24963  
(304) 753-9904  
[thepathsproject@hotmail.com](mailto:thepathsproject@hotmail.com)

– ENDNOTES –

**CHAPTER 1**

- no notes -

**CHAPTER 2**

1. NMAH Box 3, Folder 7.
2. Most likely, the dates were inserted by Shaffer after completion of his hike in the course of preparation of SR48, discussed below.
3. The pages from the NMAH reference copy of LBN relating to Shaffer's hike from its commencement to Rockfish Gap, Va., were photocopied for research use for this Report and numbered 1-71, with page 1 being the page upon which is featured the 1947 calendar.
4. See [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org).

**CHAPTER 3**

1. As previously noted, all rights to the photographs in the Shaffer collection have been reserved by The Earl Shaffer Foundation. To the extent that slides in the NMAH collections are not available in one of the Shaffer Foundation DVD's, or to the extent that the reader wishes to inspect slide mounts or other film qualities not visible in those DVD collections, a visit to the NMAH will be necessary.
2. NMAH Box 34.
3. An indication that a number of duplicate slides were made in 1973, which feature 1972-74 era "Kodachrome transparency" mounts.
4. A reference to the later, 2007, donation of that material after the initial 2005 donation of the Shaffer materials to the NMAH.
5. In the late 1940's through the early 1950's, Kodachrome film was processed only by Kodak and featured mount numbers imprinted during processing. Ansco Color film could be developed by private individuals, so the mounts did not necessarily feature numbers. In the absence of mount numbers, it is necessary to demount the slide to read the frame number on the film itself.
6. Based on the "Kodachrome Slide Dating Guide" found in [www.historicphotoarchive.com](http://www.historicphotoarchive.com).

In WWS (at 80), Shaffer reported that when he took a day off the Trail to visit his home, one of the purposes of that visit was to "look at color slides returned from processing." That supports the logical presumption that Shaffer had the Kodachrome slides from his 1948 hike processed during that year. Slides from that trip would have therefore been mounted with the "Kodachrome" mounts used by Kodak until May 1949. Slides in "Kodachrome Transparency" mounts would have been processed after May 1949.

Shaffer did apparently copy a number of his original slides, but those copies are in more modern (July 1973) Kodak mounts.

## CHAPTER 3, CONT.

The “Kodachrome Transparency” mounted slides in Shaffer’s photographic record therefore appear to be original slides taken at some point after May 1949.

7. All those glass-mount slides feature a bluish-color mount bearing what appears to be a trademark made up of a stylized “SVE” forming an inverted triangle, with the “S” and “E” forming the two sides and an elongated “V” forming the center. From internet research, this appears to be a glass mount produced by the Society For Visual Education (SVE).

8. See Chapter 16.

9. As will be discussed in later chapters, Shaffer does describe taking a number of photographs that are prominent in that photographic record.

## CHAPTER 4

1. No article about the AT has been found listed in the table of contents in the 1947 *Outdoor Life*. The article Shaffer referenced may have been a short feature.

2. In WWS (at 8), Shaffer discussed his dream from the 1930's of hiking the AT with Walter Winemiller, a close friend from boyhood with whom he had shared many outdoor experiences. Winemiller was killed in combat in WW II, at 26 years of age, at Iwo Jima.

3. NMAH Collection, Box 3, Folder 6.

4. WWS at 1.

## CHAPTER 5

1. Found in ATC Archives.

2. As of early 1948, with the 1945 and 1947 Supplements. The April 2, 1948, Supplement that included the Fontana Dam relocation would have been available to Shaffer in manuscript form from the ATC.

There was found in the NMAH Shaffer collection a 1937 Guide To The Southern Appalachians with the 1938 Supplement, but those volumes would have been supplanted as of 1942 by the 1942 Guide and therefore unlikely to have been sold by the ATC in 1948. There was also found a 1941 Guide To Paths In The Blue Ridge (Third Edition) with a copy number of “993,” meaning it was the 993<sup>rd</sup> of those volumes sold by the ATC. Although it is unknown to this author how many 1941 Guides were printed or sold, a “No. 993” was not likely a copy sold as late in the cycle as 1948. The author has in his collection of AT guides another of the same volume with a copy number of “1269” and the date “1946” written on the first page, suggesting it was received by the owner in that year. No. 993 was therefore likely sold by the ATC prior to 1946.

3. Although in Memorandum No. 3, which transmitted the 1948 Shaffer Report to the ATC Board, Avery does refer to Shaffer’s “orders for guidebooks,” he then goes on to characterize that “order” as “not indicat[ing] any more interest that[sic] similar orders for AT literature.” Avery alludes to the literature ordered by Shaffer “not catch[ing] up with him until much of his journey was completed . . . ,” which appears to reference the literature Shaffer finally received in Pennsylvania.

## CHAPTER 5, CONT.

4. Found in the ATC Archives.
5. The effect of that reblazing can apparently be seen in WWS Index Slide No. 212A, entitled "Blue Ridge Parkway," a slide taken by Shaffer in early May 1948. A classic, well-formed and very distinct AT blaze can be seen on a tree to the left at the intersection of a gravel secondary road with the Blue Ridge Parkway.
6. NBATC history as found at [www.nbatc.org](http://www.nbatc.org).

## CHAPTER 6

1. Shaffer not using an Esso map was unfortunate, since the 1948 Esso road map of North and South Carolina showed (with its overlap into Ga., and Tn.) the entire AT route through Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee and showed with an extraordinary degree of detail the location of Mt. Oglethorpe with the road approach to it used by the AT.

2. In Jasper, a view east on Google Streetview© on E. Church St (Ga. 53 E) from just west of its intersection with Wall St., with the Citco© Station to the left (coord. 34.468601, -84.428824, el. 1456'), displays substantially the same skyline to the east as what Shaffer would have viewed in 1948, disregarding the modern street scene. Using the two closest utility poles as references, Mt. Oglethorpe (3288') can be seen on the skyline immediately behind the right pole, with the ridge extending north to Sassafras Mt. ( ), with can be seen just to the right of the left utility pole, and with the higher summits of the Chattahoochee National Forest visible to the north.

It should be noted the 38' white marble Oglethorpe Monument that marked the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe in 1948 has since been relocated to downtown Jasper (south of the intersection of Chambers St. with N. Main St.)

3. NMAH Box 8, Folder 8.
4. 3290' was the elevation stated in the 1942 and '50 AT Guides. The elevation of that mountain on the 1972 USGS Nelson 7.5' Quadrangle is indicated as 3288.'
5. The southernmost of those two summits, at 3226', is designated as "Sassafras Mt." on the 1971 USGS Amicalola 7.5' Quadrangle. The northernmost summit, which was 0.3 miles from the southern summit with an elevation of approximately 3260', was the location of the Sassafras Mt. Tower. The area of that summit now features a fire station and radio tower along a paved Monument Road, with the pavement ending (in 2011) just south of that point.
6. That gap is visible on Google Streetview © at what is now a crossroads, with Sunrise Ridge Rd. to the north of Ga. 136 and the new Monument Rd. to the south (Coord. 34.540845, -84.344208).
7. NMAH Box 8, Folder 7.
8. The Sunrise Ridge Rd. is now located along that ridge.
9. It is that summit that is the prominent feature on the ridge to the east in Shaffer's Sequoyah Lake self-portrait.

## CHAPTER 6, CONT.

10. This road was also known as the “Settlement Road.” It was noted in the 1950 Guide that it “may be impassable in wet weather.” To the left, it led app. 1.5 miles to the dam at Sequoyah Lake. The nearly circular course of travel of a hiker following the Tate Mt. Estates route to Mt. Oglethorpe is indicated by the more than 12 miles of travel from Sequoyah Lake to Mt. Oglethorpe and back to the AT intersecting GA. 108 ending up at a point only 1.5 miles from that same Sequoyah Lake.

11. Along road walk that would seem even longer for Shaffer because he had traveled the same road the day before in traveling toward Mt. Oglethorpe.

12. That intersection still exists as the intersection of a Park residence road with the road to the campground.

13. NMAH Box 8, Folder 7.

14. U.S. Naval Observatory data.

## CHAPTER 7

1. Although Shaffer’s report of fixing breakfast at a spring north of Springer Mt. (near the current location of the Springer Mt. Shelter) would appear to put him in the right direction to follow the 1948 AT after that trail intersection.

2. Shaffer’s noting that “[t]rees were moss-spotted. . .” supports that conclusion, since it is possible to mistake such growth on tree barks as very old AT blazes.

3. Weather data from the Utah Climate Center at Utah State University indicated that there was, of April 5, 1048, 0.25" of precipitation at Dawsonville, GA, to the south, but a much more substantial 1.2" at Blairsville, GA, to the north.

4. Apparently, Shaffer had not used the tent in rainy conditions (or at all) before beginning his hike.

5. In SR48, Shaffer relates the trip into Suches on April 7<sup>th</sup>, but does not mention the trip to get matches earlier that same day.

6. His 9.9 mile performance on April 8<sup>th</sup> from Frying Pan Gap to Cane Creek Gap is not explained in the record.

## CHAPTER 8

1. Unidentified by Shaffer in LBN and SR48, Shaffer was able to recall Buchanan’s name in WWS.

2. The publication date of the First Edition of the Guide To The Southern Appalachians.

3. Having resupplied that day.

4. Shaffer’s WWS and SR48 descriptions of his hike on April 16<sup>th</sup> included his leaving the AT at Stecoah Gap to go into to Cheoah to mail home his tent. That side trip is not mentioned in LBN.

## CHAPTER 8, CONT.

5. The other party of hikers, including the one who had started from Oglethorpe, were apparently also not carrying AT guidebooks.
6. Tapoco was one of the mail-drop post offices Shaffer had identified for mail from home.
7. The identity of these hikers is not stated in the LBN, the 1948 Shaffer Report, or WWS. The photograph generically titled “Two Men” in WWS Index No. 72, may be of those two hikers. Shaffer’s “mental picture” of one of the two men “holding a salamander by the tail while the other photographed it” (WWS at 26) appears to describe that photograph.
8. 1950 Guide To The Appalachian Trail In The Southern Appalachians (Third Edition) at 280-82.
9. The WWS report that Shaffer (and the other two hikers) “. . . didn’t know which way to go . . . “ at a trail junction above Fontana Village” would appear to place them at Green Gap, which would have meant they continued to follow the crest of Yellow Mt. beyond the new AT intersection. That account seems to indicate that the three hikers, not knowing “which way to go,” descended the loop trail the 1,000 vertical feet, and couple of miles, to Fontana Village, before turning around and returning to that ridge by the same trail.

Such a report makes no topographical sense. Green Gap is on Yellow Creek Mt., and even with only a road map a hiker following the AT on a road map would be aware that from Green Gap, or any point on that mountain, the route to Tapoco was to continue to follow the mountain. “Which way to go” on that mountain en route to Tapoco is to continue to follow the mountain in a westerly direction, not descend off the mountain to the north and then ascend back up the same trail to the same crest, which is what Shaffer reported in WWS.
10. It is more credible to interpret Shaffer’s reference to a “trail junction” overlooking Fontana Village as being a reference to the new AT intersection with the old AT on Yellow Creek Mt.
10. Shaffer did apparently identify post offices for mail drops for mail before his hike. These mail drop post offices included Rainbow Springs (WWS at 22) and Tapoco (WWS at 28).
11. The significance of Shaffer overtaking, and getting ahead, of that other thru-hiker should not be overlooked. It was that hiker who was Shaffer’s only known competitor to become the first thru-hiker. Starting a week behind that hiker, Shaffer was undoubtedly aware of the importance of overtaking and staying ahead of that hiker.
12. Weather records for Gatlinburg, TN, indicate no precipitation for the period April 16- April 23, 1948, with high temperatures in the 70's and 80's and lows predominantly in the 40's. Even taking into consideration the substantial elevation difference between Gatlinburg and the AT through the GSMNP, such records suggest Shaffer enjoyed remarkably favorable weather through the GSMNP.
13. Since the two other hikers stayed at the lodge in Tapoco, and one of them had apparently joined the other at the Nantahala River, Tapoco may have been their immediate destination.
14. The other AT section missed by Shaffer that was specifically addressed by Avery was the relocation north of Bearwallow Gap, in Virginia.

## CHAPTER 9

1. April 21<sup>st</sup> in LBN.
2. While identifying “J. L. Moore” in SR48 and WWS, and providing considerable detail as to his lodging with the Moore’s in WWS, neither the identity of that person nor any of the detail provided in WWS is found in LBN.
3. April 23<sup>rd</sup> in LBN.
4. The 1940 (revised 1968) USGS Waterville 7.5' Quadrangle, with its 1940 mapping date, offers a contemporary view of that point, with the Appalachian Trail route indicated on the map. Spanish Oak Gap is not named, is the sag northeast of “Peaked Knob.” The two roads to the right, and the road to the left, are apparent on the map.
5. Along the current location of the AT, which was shifted to the west after construction of I-40.
6. That part of Cocke County, Tennessee, was an area of extensive upland farms and forests that would have featured an extensive network of such paths and woods roads.
7. That part of Cocke County, Tennessee, was an area of extensive upland farms and forests that would have featured an extensive network of such paths and woods roads.
8. LBN and SR48 provide only the name “Spanish Oak.” WWS provides much more, and remarkably specific, details about Spanish Oak Gap. This is another example of the later-written WWS providing specific details that have no foundation in LBN or SR48.
9. Shaffer would have to be a particularly skillful woodsman to successfully navigate by compass, using such “dead reckoning,” by reference to a non-topographical map road map with a scale of 1' to app. 15 miles.
10. The 1950 Guide, which was likely based on 1948-49 trail conditions, makes no mention of any “disruption” to that trail from storms, fire or logging, the most common causes of trail disruption.
11. From Utah Climate Center data at Utah State University.
12. As previously seen in other off-AT travel, Shaffer did not backtrack unless (as at Doublehead Gap in Georgia) he had to. Instead, he first looked for a way to continue ahead to rejoin the AT at some point beyond where he had left it.
13. Shaffer reported bushwhacking in the area of The Priest, in Virginia, but that was (as will be discussed later in this report) a section of AT under construction.

## CHAPTER 10

1. The author has vivid memories on a hike in 1962 along the Blue Ridge north of the James River having to stand on stumps to sight ahead over the head-high stinging nettle for the next AT blaze.
2. This was probably Bascom Green’s store in Limestone Cove, which was noted in the 1942 and 1950 Guides.

## CHAPTER 10, CONT.

3. That “rumor” was likely a reference to the Stone Mt. Trail, a Forest Service trail crossing that ridge to the west that was shown on Cherokee National Forest Maps during that time period.
4. Shaffer reported in WWS that he requested that the boots be resoled without heels, Indian-style.
5. Hampton had been on the AT from its inception, which was a period of nearly 20 years by 1948. It is therefore difficult to accept the idea that repeated inquiries, such as at the post office, in Hampton would have produced no information about the AT.
6. The AT was shown on the road map as being to the west of Tn. 67.
7. Weather data from the Utah Climate Center at Utah State University indicates no record of precipitation at either the Johnson City Veterans Hospital, to the west of Shaffer’s location that night, or at Damascus, Va., to its north, on April 27<sup>th</sup> or 28<sup>th</sup>, 1948. A weather station to the northwest in North Carolina (Parker) recorded 0.12" of precipitation on April 27<sup>th</sup> and 0.05" on April 28<sup>th</sup>. Records were not available for Hampton.
8. Following those local directions would have apparently had him descending the mountain on the old Vandeventer Trail into the Stoney Creek Valley.

## CHAPTER 11

1. Having crossed the state line at about noon, according to the SR48 .
2. WWS reports that Shaffer camped at a spring near Skulls Gap, approximately 5½ miles further north on the AT. That would have required a 23+ mile day with the stop in Damascus and the extended visit at Feathercamp Lookout. It is likely that this is a case of Shaffer not recalling events of 1948 as accurately in WWS as he did in the more contemporary SR48 .
3. Feathercamp Lookout, 5.4 miles north on the AT from Damascus on the former Iron Mt. route.
4. Iron Mountain Gap, where the AT crossed Va. 16, marked the southern end of the 197.28 mile section of the old AT route abandoned when the AT route was shifted north in the 1950's.
5. Jones Knob Lookout, 11.5 miles south of Bylesby.
6. One of the more striking omissions in Shaffer’s narratives is his failure to mention or apparently take any photographs of the Comers Rock Camp, a Jefferson National Forest facility (now the Comers Rock Campground in the Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area) on Iron Mt. 3.7 miles south (on the AT) of U.S. 21. The 1950 Guide (at 14-349) describes that Camp as having (as of 1949) picnic tables, fireplaces and a spring. There was also an 0.2 m. side road to the Comers Rock Lookout (4,035'), which the Guide described as a “magnificent view.” The AT passed Comers Rock Camp while following an unpaved forest service road for 6.5 miles through a heavily forested area from Blue Spring Gap to Dry Run Gap, where U.S. 21 crossed Iron Mt.

Shaffer would have passed through that area on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, but none of his narratives (LBN, SR48, or WWS) makes any mention of the road, the Camp, Comers Rock Lookout, or U.S. 21. Instead, Shaffer generally describes his May 3<sup>rd</sup> hike as through pastures on ridges with many “snake

## CHAPTER 11, CONT.

fences” eventually reaching a lookout (Jones Knob). That description was apparently an accurate one in 1948 for the AT north of U.S. 21, but omits any reference to features along the 6.5 mile section through the Comers Rock area south of U.S. 21.

Since the Comers Rock Camp was the only developed Forest Service facility Shaffer passed on Iron Mt., and Shaffer seemingly always visited and mentioned lookout towers, it is particularly puzzling that he made no reference to passing either in his May 3<sup>rd</sup> narratives.

7. C. S. Jackson, who lived on Brush Creek Rd., who had marked the original AT from Byllesby to U.S. 21. In WWS (at 55), Shaffer recounted talking with him, and described the conical hay stacks on Jackson’s farm. Although not identified as such, two photographs in WWS Index (Nos. 190 and 191) appear to be photographs of those hay stacks on Jackson’s farm on May 4, 1948.

8. From the website of the Utah Climate Center at Utah State University.

9. This was an active railroad line in 1948. According to the September 26, 1946, N & W timetable for that line (published in [www.orvillesworld.com](http://www.orvillesworld.com)), Train No. 49 ran once a day from Pulaski to Galax, and there were two trains a day (Nos. 55 and 57) on the spur line from Fries Junction to Fries.

10. VSR 737 formerly extended down river to Ivanhoe. Former VSR 737 down river has been truncated and is now an extension of VSR 602, which ends as a maintained road at Buck Dam.

The former AT intersection with that road is directly across from the parking area/canoe put-in downstream from Byllesby dam. In 1975, a diamond-shaped AT marker was still on a tree marking that turn for southbound hikers, but it has since disappeared.

11. Road data in this area has been obtained from review of the 1949 VDOT Carroll County Highway Map.

12. The 1947 reblazing ( *see* p. 5-3 and Endnote 5, Chapter 5) project probably focused on renewing markings along the public roads that served as the AT’s primary route through southern Virginia in order to maintain the continuity of the AT through that area. In the case of the Byllesby-Dixon Ferry section, only the two ends (at Byllesby and Dixon Ferry) would have been accessible by automobile. If time was limited for the project, it could well have been that a marking crew would have made a visit to only those two locations in that section of the AT to renew AT marking.

This section of the AT had likely been last completely remarked when revised trail data was prepared for the 1940 Guide To Paths In The Blue Ridge (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). That data was different than the previous data in the 1938 Supplement, but data in the 1950 4<sup>th</sup> Edition was apparently repeated from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. At that time, VSR 737 would have offered dry-weather automobile access along the AT route from Byllesby to Edwards’ Siding (now NRT Double Shoals Campground). Those earlier blazes or markers would have therefore likely been in place for about 10 years, and therefore still useful for navigation to the experienced eye of a long-range AT hiker even if faded.

13. The SR48 indicates that Shaffer camped near the AT about a mile beyond a lookout tower. That tower was apparently the Jones Knob Lookout, which was 11.5 miles from Byllesby.

## CHAPTER 11, CONT.

14. The SR48 refers to “Jackson, an oldtime forest man,” while WWS (at 54) identifies the man as C. S. Jackson, a retired U.S. Forest Service employee who had first marked the AT from Byllesby to U.S. 21. In WWS (at 54), Shaffer describes conical hay stacks on Jackson’s farm. WWS Index Photos 190 and 191, although not identified as such by Shaffer, may well be photographs of those haystacks on Jackson’s farm on May 4, 1948.
15. Shaffer’s identifying Byllesby Dam by name is another example of LBN including information that Shaffer would not have known from a road map. Neither the Gulf Oil (Rand McNally) nor the ESSO (General Drafting) road maps of the late 1940’s reviewed for this Report identified Byllesby on the map.
16. None of the AT Guides indicate there was any store in Byllesby, and there has not been found any other report of a store in Byllesby. Neither LBN nor WWS makes any mention of a store in Byllesby.
17. Weather station records from the website of the Utah Climate Center at Utah State University indicate that there was no precipitation recorded at the Byllesby or Hillsville (VA) weather stations on May 4, 1948. The Wytheville station records indicate 0.32" of precipitation. The only of those three stations with temperature records available was Wytheville, where the daily high temperature fell to 65° on May 4<sup>th</sup> from a high of 77° the previous day.
18. A 1948 Gulf map of NC/SC, that included this area in the overlap area, was reviewed.
19. Byllesby was shown on none of the road maps reviewed.
20. The former N & W Railroad through Byllesby to Galax and Fries is now the rail-trail of the New River Trail State Park (“NRT”), a Virginia State Park.
21. In 1948, VSR 737 apparently ended at Brush Creek. It had formerly crossed Brush Creek on a bridge immediately beside the railroad bridge. The 1940 VDOT Carroll County Highway Map showed VSR 737 extending upriver beyond Fries Junction, then turning away from the river on an old road (still used by high clearance vehicles) near the NRT Double Shoals Campground. By the time of publication of the 1949 map, VSR 737 had been truncated at Brush Creek, suggesting that the Brush Creek bridge had been abandoned by 1949 (or possibly washed out in the historic New River flood of August 1940). The VSR 737 Brush Creek bridge therefore may or may not have been present in 1948.
22. From Byllesby to Brush Creek, former VSR 737 (which has been abandoned as a public road upstream of Byllesby, with the portion downstream now an extension of VSR 602) , is at first passable for high clearance vehicles, but by the time it returns to the railroad at Brush Creek it is overgrown. Maintenance on the railroad and NRT has obliterated the former crossing and partially filled in the old road bed from Brush Creek to Fries Junction that was located between the railroad and the lake.
23. The old roadbed can be seen on the embankment above where grading was done to construct the NRT toilet building at Fries Junction.
24. Near the NRT Double Shoals Campground. VSR 737 (Fries Junction Rd.) formerly left the river at this junction to reach Va. 94 in app. 1½ miles. That abandoned road is still used for high-clearance vehicle access to the New River.

## CHAPTER 11, CONT.

25. The 1940 Guide notes that the old river road upstream from this point had been washed out and abandoned, with the old roadbed remaining as a path beside the railroad.
26. Both brooks can now be identified by short former railroad bridges on the NRT.
27. The 1933 USGS 15' Galax Quadrangle notes the name of that ferry as "Dixon Ferry," while the AT Guides identifies it as "Dixons Ferry." Thus Report shall use the AT Guide "Dixons Ferry."
28. NMAH Box 8, Folder 7.
29. The indicated strike-out is in the original document.

Shaffer would have likely found walking that railroad to Galax as frustrating as continuing to Fries. Following the windings of Chestnut Creek, it was about 14 miles by railroad to Galax through several industrialized areas. The same route is now a very scenic trip on the NRT.

30. That road is now a private driveway running from VSR 721 to a home.
31. NMAH Box 8, Folder 7.
32. That "river to my left" may be a reference to the Dixons Ferry site.
33. Shaffer's looking for a bridge could not be based on any road map. It is unlikely that any 1948 road map would show a bridge over the New River between Byllesby and Galax, since there was no bridge across that river in that area.
34. Now VSR 721, with the New River bridge just upstream of Dixons Ferry.
35. That road and ferry were shown on either the WV-VA or the NC-SC Esso (General Drafting) map. In fact, the Esso NC-SC map, with its overlapping coverage into Georgia, Tennessee and Virginia, could have been used for the entire distance of the AT from Mt. Oglethorpe, Ga., through NC, TN, and well into VA.
36. That transmission line was a short distance away on the hill above the town, so it would not have likely taken more than an hour to investigate and eliminate it as the AT.

Shaffer's looking for the AT away from the river indicates how confused and disoriented he must have been. It could not be clearer from his map that if the AT was in Fries, it would be crossing the river toward Galax (which meant Blair Ferry), not moving in the opposite direction away from the river. But in SR48, Shaffer states that after he arrived in Fries, he "wasted several hours before realizing the trail crossed the river."

37. NMAH Box 8, Folder 7.
38. An interesting insight can be gained into Shaffer's attitude about following the actual AT from this WWS Draft entry. In this sentence, he explains that in cases in which he did not follow the AT, his "conscience" would be "eased by the fact that I had spent more time and effort . . . than would have been required to walk the [AT] distance." By that concept, he apparently justified to himself his not following the AT, or even accepting a motor vehicle ride around a section of the AT, by his instead completing what he deemed to be what might be termed an "equivalent hike." The presence

## CHAPTER 11, CONT.

of such an “equivalent hike” attitude in Shaffer may help explain what will repeatedly be seen over the next ten days of his AT hike as an apparently casual attitude about his following, or not following, the AT.

39. *Earl Shaffer's 1965 Appalachian Trail Journal* (© Earl Shaffer Foundation) as published at [www.trailjournals.com](http://www.trailjournals.com).

40. The AT went down Main Street in Galax in 1948.

41. Published on May 20, 1948. See Chapter 12.

42. Although the New River in the Fries area can be a formidable river in high water, it would have probably been displaying much more of its general “wide and shallow” character on May 4 and 5, 1948. According to weather station records available on the website of the Utah Climate Center at Utah State University, the Byllesby weather station had recorded no precipitation on May 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>, and had recorded no precipitation since April 16, 1948, other than 0.09" on April 28<sup>th</sup> and 0.22" on April 29<sup>th</sup>. Wytheville, VA, weather station records indicate 0.32" of precipitation on May 4<sup>th</sup>, but no other precipitation since April 15, 1948, except for 0.12" on April 25<sup>th</sup> and 0.1" on April 29<sup>th</sup>.

43. The AT route from Dixons Ferry intersected and thereafter followed the Blair Ferry (Fries - Galax) Road to Galax at app. 3 m. from Dixons Ferry.

44. NMAH Box 8, Folder 7.

45. The distance that the AT either followed the path beside the railroad, or the railroad itself, between Byllesby and Dixons Ferry.

46. The 1942 Guide To The Appalachian Trail In The Southern Appalachians (Second Edition) listed (at 2-1) the official mileage of the AT as 2,050 miles. The 1950 Guide To The Appalachian Trail In The Southern Appalachians (Third Edition), which would have more accurate AT mileages for 1948, listed (at 2-1) the official mileage as 2,021. Since Shaffer did not hike the shorter Fontana Dam relocation route, his mileage to Damascus would be closer to the 1942 Guide distance of 420.21 miles.

47. Assuming Galax was on daylight savings time, Shaffer left Galax just as the sun was rising at 6:29 a.m. DST (U.S. Naval Observatory data).

48. The Trail Of My Life : The Gene Espy Story at 91 (Indigo Publishing Group, 2008).

49. The interview's most humorous aspect was the interest in Espy's beard. The article reported that Espy said he hadn't shaved since the hike began and didn't intend to until the hike was over. The article related that when asked “if he wasn't afraid he would be tripping on the beard before then,” Espy replied that “he didn't think so, but if it happened, he would tie a knot in it, thus shortening it.”

50. NMAH Box 8, Folder 7.

51. Fisher Peak is on the North Carolina - Virginia border.

## CHAPTER 11, CONT.

52. Probably in that previously discussed March 15, 1947, “reblazing” project sponsored by the ATC.
53. The intersection of Va. 97 and Coal Creek Road can be viewed on Google Streetview © at Coord. 36.641367, -8090641.
54. The distance that the AT either followed the path beside the railroad, or the railroad itself, between Byllesby and Dixons Ferry.

## CHAPTER 12

1. 1950 Guide To Paths In The Blue Ridge (4<sup>th</sup> Edition), hereinafter “1950 Guide”. The 1950 Guide is used because it is based on data more current in 1948 than the 1941 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.
2. BRP Mileage from The Blue Ridge Parkway Guide, by William G. Lord (1969).
3. The photograph of Byllesby from Farmers Mt. on May 4<sup>th</sup> (WWS Index No. 200) was Mount No. 9. A photograph entitled “Mt. View” (WWS Index No. 202) may have been Mount No. 10, but the actual photograph has not been located to confirm that film number. The next found photograph is this view of the BRP. It therefore appears Shaffer took no photographs between Farmers Mt. and the BRP.
4. Given the apparent regrading of the former VSR 608 intersection with the BRP just north of Pipers Gap, it is difficult to determine with certainty whether that Shaffer photograph is of that particular intersection. However, the slide mount number and sequence of photographs places the photograph south of the Sugarloaf Mt. Overlook, and the angle of view does appear to be as similar as might be expected with the passage of more than 60 years.
5. This overlook (at BRP Mile 202.7) was identified as the “Sugarloaf Overlook” on the 1968 (photo-revised 1985) USGS 7.5' Fancy Gap Quadrangle. It is identified on the BRP sign at the overlook as the Granite Quarry Overlook.
6. The BRP photograph (WWS Index 212A/Mount No. 11) was taken on the AT at the point it intersected the BRP.
7. Reference found in Georgia Archives, probably an ATN article.
8. The original AT had followed the old ridge road (VSR 608), but had been relocated after BRP construction to secondary roads more distant from the BRP.
9. Shaffer reported in LBN (at 51) he was “very low” on supplies the following evening (May 6<sup>th</sup>). His being low on supplies at that point is further indication that Shaffer walked the BRP rather than the AT through the Fancy Gap area on May 5<sup>th</sup>, since he would have certainly resupplied at the store in Fancy Gap if he had passed it. It is therefore likely that Shaffer passed by Fancy Gap on the high overpass of the BRP with no contact with that community or store.
10. BRP Milepoint 189.9.
11. This BRP photo was seemingly carefully composed to feature the BRP sign in the foreground and the stone BRP bridge in the background. Along with the other BRP photographs, the attention

## CHAPTER 12, CONT.

Shaffer paid to this BRP photograph further accentuates Shaffer's May 5<sup>th</sup> focus on the BRP, rather than the AT.

12. "Bursted Rock" was described in the 1950 Guide (at 14-340) as a "narrow crest" along which VSR 610 was located. Shaffer may have known the name of the feature from signs mentioned in the 1950 Guide that noted viewpoints.

13. Shaffer had left Galax early on the 5<sup>th</sup>, presumably having resupplied there. He reported he was very low on supplies by early on the 7<sup>th</sup>, after only two days travel from Galax.

14. VSR 610 leading to U.S. 58 was described in the 1950 Guide (at 14-339) as a "narrow rough dirt road barely passable by automobile in dry weather.

15. Shaffer's apparent failure to follow the AT through Fancy Gap on the 5<sup>th</sup> (see note 8, above) had denied him access to resupply at the store in that community. His failure to carry a Guide caused him to not know that the 1950 Guide indicated that there was a store 7.9 miles north on the AT from U.S. 58 at Rock Castle Gorge, another store on the AT 3.1 miles from that one near the Rocky Knob Area, and another store 6.17 miles from that one at Tuggle Gap. So even with Shaffer's surprising short "range" between resupplying (i.e., leaving Galax on the 5<sup>th</sup> and low on supplies by the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup>), there were, according to the Guide, 3 stores ahead on the AT within the next 17.17 miles.

16. VSR 758, to the left, was a recognized 5.6 m. AT side trip to Buffalo Mt. Its rocky summit (3,971') was noted in the 1950 Guide (at 14-337) as a remarkable viewpoint "from which the Peaks of Otter, more than 100 miles northeast on the Trail, and White Top Mtn. in the Jefferson National Forest, nearly equally distant southwest on the Trail, are visible on a clear day."

17. Slate Mt. Presbyterian Church, one of the six stone churches in the area built under the leadership of Rev. Bob Childress between 1929 and 1954. His life was chronicled in a book entitled The Man Who Moved A Mountain. He was one of the 1,000 or so children delivered by Aunt Orlean Puckett (*Roanoke Times*, December 7, 2006). Her home is featured at the "Puckett Cabin" Exhibit on the BRP previously discussed.

18. Shaffer's visit with the Handy family is the only extended visit he reported with any local residents along the secondary roads that made up a substantial part of the 1948 AT from the New River to Glenvar.

That section of the AT had no shelters for overnight camping (as will be discussed later, there was a day-use shelter on Rocky Knob). However, the absence of shelters did not mean an absence of overnight facilities along the AT. To the contrary, the traditional hospitality of farm families along those isolated, unpaved roads was a remarkable aspect of the AT through southern Virginia. A simple inquiry at a farm along the road would often result in an offer of sleeping space in a barn and perhaps a meal with the family.

Gene Espy, who thru-hiked the AT in 1951, described that hospitality in Chapter 14 (at pp. 89 - 92) of his autobiography entitled The Trail Of My Life : The Gene Espy Story (Indigo Publishing Group, 2008). That title of the chapter, which describes Espy's hike through southern Virginia in July 1951, sums up his experience with that hospitality by its title: *Good Food And Good People*. For his overnight stopping places for that period (July 1 - 6, 1951: see p. 136), Espy lists

## CHAPTER 12, CONT.

3 private residences (with his listing of Byllesby Station apparently being the John Dent Burnett residence), one store (Fancy Gap), one former store, and one hayloft.

Espy described (at p. 89) the remarkable AT experience of that period in southern Virginia, as follows:

The farm families would not only allow me to stay in an outbuilding, they would invite me to join them for supper and breakfast. Because my arrival was unexpected, I shared the meals they had planned for themselves. Breakfast in these homes featured home-sliced bacon (streak of lean and streak of fat) and biscuits with the thickest white gravy I had ever seen.

. . .

When it came time to retire, I usually ended up in a bed in the home, not an outbuilding.

. . .

I sensed that most of these people in southern Virginia were good, hardworking people – poor, but certainly generous. Some homes had no electricity, no window screens, and no indoor plumbing. No one would accept remuneration [although Espy reported that he would sometimes “slip a couple of dollars bills under my breakfast plate . . .

Espy reported (at pp. 90-91) that he was refused permission to stay in farm outbuildings only once during his 1951 hike.

Shaffer’s experience with the storekeeper in Fries on the evening of May 4<sup>th</sup> and with the Handy family on May 7<sup>th</sup> hinted at the similar reception he would have received if he had made more contact with local residents. For whatever reason, though, he apparently did not approach local farm families for lodging, and apparently had little contact with local residents. Instead of farm families, his overnight stopping places through that same region (May 4 - 9) included one commercial tourist home, primitive camps in the woods along roads on May 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, an after-dark arrival at the Rocky Knob day-use shelter on the 7<sup>th</sup>, and a camp at the Smart View Picnic Area on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

There is, therefore, a striking contrast between the reported experiences as to lodging along the AT in southern Virginia of Shaffer in 1948 and Espy in 1951. As discussed in Chapter 11 and throughout this chapter, those very different experiences may reflect the fact that while the focus of Shaffer’s 1948 hike was the BRP, Espy actually followed the AT through that area. That would account for Shaffer’s contacts and narrative primarily reflecting BRP personnel and features while Espy’s narrative reflecting his extensive contact with the farm families along the secondary roads followed by the AT.

19. Weather station records from the website of the Utah Climate Center at Utah State University indicate 0.99" of precipitation at Meadows of Dan on May 7<sup>th</sup>, with no temperature data available. A weather station at Wytheville, to the north, recorded a high of 59° on May 7<sup>th</sup>, with a low temperature of 38° the night before and a low of 46° the night of May 7<sup>th</sup>. Shaffer did, therefore, experience cold, wet weather on May 7<sup>th</sup>.

## CHAPTER 12, CONT.

20. That photograph is of record in WWS Index No. 211, and NMAH Slides No. 067. It is Film No. 01, suggesting Shaffer bought (or loaded a new roll of) film at Meadows of Dan.

That Shaffer photograph of Mabry Mill is featured in WWS even though it was taken by Shaffer during the process of skipping a section of the AT. The caption to that photograph as published in WWS (at 59) seems to infer that Mabry Mill was on the 1948 AT route in that it reads that the Mabry Mill site “is far from the present AT route.” In fact, it was several miles off the AT route in 1948. That caption suggests that even the ATC representatives involved in its publication of WWS in 1983 were unaware of the actual route of the AT through southern Virginia in 1948.

21. Sun/moon data from website of U.S. Naval Observatory.

22. The AT, following VSR 720, had crossed the BRP from left to right about 0.9 miles prior to the BRP reached the Rocky Knob Recreation Area. Shaffer apparently did not notice that crossing. If he had, and turned onto VSR 720, he would have found both a school and a store along the 1.29 miles of that road to the point where the AT turned off to follow a trail into the Rocky Knob area. He may well have found a more comfortable place to camp on that cold, windy night along that road than he did on the stone floor of the shelter on the exposed summit of Rocky Knob.

23. Map spot elevation.

24. In fact, those roads, along with what is now VSR 723/Patrick Rd. and an abandoned extension of that road that once joined VSR 720 at the crest, were the route of the AT for a period in the 1930's when the original AT route over Rocky Knob, which passed through extensive grazing and cultivated areas, was found to be difficult to follow in poor visibility conditions and obstructed by cultivation through part of the year.

The abandoned public road beyond the current VSR 723/Patrick Rd. is within the NPS property boundary, and is part of the NPS Black Ridge Trail. With the main NPS trail along the crest also apparently the later AT route, there are two different routes of the former AT now part of the Rocky Knob Recreation Area trail system, along with the shelter on Rocky Knob.

25. In the vicinity of Fairview Church.

26. Using a 1950 Guide, the author located and followed the old AT route from the BRP to VSR 716 on April 4, 2011.

27. If Shaffer did not consult his compass and viewed the BRP as trending north (in fact, its direction at Tuggle Gap was generally east), his diversion on VSR 720 would have “felt” west to him.

28. Guide To Paths In The Blue Ridge, (4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1950) at 14-335 (revised 1949). The 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (1940) also noted the use of metal markers for the AT. In WWS (at 59) Shaffer describes seeing a metal AT marker, which seems to confirm the use of such markers in the Rocky Knob Recreation Area.

29. The process of moving parts of the AT onto foot trails within the BRP corridor was in its initial stages when the ATC made the decision to abandon the AT through southern Virginia.

## CHAPTER 12, CONT.

30. To the right was the former route of the AT in the BRP corridor that avoided travel on U.S. 221. It was relocated to roads when the ATC made the decision to abandon the AT through southern Virginia.

Sweet Anne Hollow was one of the more interesting place names on the old AT. According to William G. Lord, author of The Blue Ridge Parkway Guide - Section B (1969), at page 6<sub>B</sub>, the legend of Sweet Anne Hollow was that:

Annie, a widow by fate and a friendly sort by nature, resided in the Hollow during the Revolution. Troopers of the Continental Army were frequent visitors and reportedly, she entertained them “in a most irreligious manner.” Her neighbors took a dim view of the situation and Annie obliged by leaving the country. But though Annie didn’t live there any more, the troopers landmarked her homesite as Sweet Ann’s Hollow.

31. The short section of trail over Smith Mt. was a truncated remnant of the original AT through southern Virginia. While on private lands in 1948, the old AT route over Smith Mt. appears to now be wholly, or substantially, on BRP property.

The original AT, as described in the original edition (1931) of the Guide To Paths In The Blue Ridge, followed the crest of Smith Mt. (which was described as having an “Extensive panoramic view of Roanoke and Franklin Counties east”), then along Bent Mt. and onto the crest of the Blue Ridge at Slings Gap. From Slings Gap, the AT descended toward the Maggotty Creek Road (now VSR 726, Wades Gap Rd.), passing through Wetts Orchard. The AT then followed the road to cross now U.S. 221, then ascended again to the crest of the Blue Ridge (along the Roanoke -Franklin County line) and passed through Cromwell Gap and Windy Gap along the ridge to intercept what is now VSR 681 (Coopers Gap Rd.) which it followed to the cross the Roanoke River at Horn’s Ford, which was 30 AT miles from Smith Mt.

The original AT crossed the Roanoke River at Horn’s Ford (“either by shallow ford or by boat that is available”) to reach Gravel Hill Rd. (now an extension of VSR 631), which it followed to Hardy’s Ford Pike (now VSR 634, Hardy Rd.) at Gravel Hill Church. It then followed Hardy’s Ford Pike to Vinton (at a point 38 miles from Smith Mt.), then Vinton Rd. to State Highway 10 (now U.S. 460). The old AT the followed State Highway 10 through Blue Ridge Springs to Montvale (also known as Burford), which it reached at 55.65 miles from Smith Mt. From Montvale, the AT followed VSR 617 (Pike Rd.), then an “abandoned roadway” up to the crest of the Blue Ridge (and the modern AT corridor at or near Bobbitt Gap) at a point 63.3 miles from Smith Mt. The original AT then followed a “faint trail” then an “old, faint wagon road” into Bearwallow Gap, which was 66.2 miles from Smith Mt. It then continued to the Peaks of Otter (Mons) at 73.1 miles from Smith Mt.

A footnote at page 87 of the 1931 Guide indicated that trail data for that section of the original AT were initially prepared by Roy R. Ozmer and issued as Potomac Appalachian Trail Club Bulletin No. 23. It included only north-south trail data with several references to proposed side trails, including one from Smith Mt. to Bent Mt. Falls (Bottom Creek Falls?). Complete north-south data for the original AT through southern Virginia for the 193.5 miles from Peaks of Otter (Mons) to Byllesby were prepared by S.L. Cole, President of the Southern Virginia Appalachian Trail Association.

## CHAPTER 12, CONT.

The '31 Guide indicated (at 87) that the route was "marked with metal markers, supplemented by the trail mark of the Southern Virginia Appalachian Trail Association, one long and one short blaze, placed perpendicularly. Some of these blazes are painted white."

The Vinton - Montvale AT route was abandoned by the time of publication of the 1934 Guide To Paths In The Blue Ridge (Second Edition). The AT route detailed in that Guide was relocated to the one moving west from Smith Mt. over Poor Mt. to Glenvar, over Ft. Lewis Mt. to Mason Cove, and then joining the modern AT corridor near McAfee Knob. That remained the general route in 1948, and until abandonment of the AT through southern Virginia in the 1950's.

32. The BRP north ended at Adney Gap in 1948 pending future construction through the Roanoke Valley.

33. This was apparently William G. Lord, who later wrote The Blue Ridge Parkway Guide discussed in Note 30, above. According to the Foreword to that book, Lord worked for nine years on the BRP as a Ranger and Naturalist.

34. The last AT crossing of the BRP was at VSR 641, app. 3.1 m. south of Pine Spur Overlook.

To the north, the AT went under a BRP overpass at Sweet Anne Hollow, 6.2 miles from Pine Spur Overlook, with no direct contact between the AT and BRP. The AT then joined the BRP near Adney Gap for a short distance before leaving to move west toward Glenvar.

35. Approximately 15 miles from Pipers Gap to Groundhog Mt., 9.6 miles from Meadows of Dan to Rocky Knob, and 25.5 miles from Tuggle Gap to the point where the AT turned off the BRP south of Adney Gap.

## CHAPTER 13

1. That old cabin was apparently the same one identified in the 1950 Guide as being 4.06 miles north of U.S. 11 at Glenvar.

2. According to the list of trail maintaining clubs by AT section in the 1950 ATC booklet *The Appalachian Trail*.

3. Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club.

4. Havens Wildlife Management Area.

5. The gate at the Havens Wildlife Management Area boundary is app. 2.2 miles from the AT intersection with the road leading to that gate, according to the 1963 (revised 1984) USGS Catawba 7.5" Quadrangle.

6. If so, the old blazes would have been at least 10 years, and perhaps as much as 15 years, old. This would suggest the longevity of such older AT blazes in terms of other areas of the AT traveled by Shaffer.

7. Or he not having followed it.

## CHAPTER 13, CONT.

8. The Black Horse Gap -U.S. 460 construction on the BRP (Project 1-L) began on 6/10/46 and was open to visitors on 10/4/50.
9. If so, that would indicate that AT markers or blazes last renewed no later than 1938 were still apparent enough to follow in 1948.
10. That photograph is apparently No. 0204 in the Extra Slides DVD.
11. 1950 Guide at 14-308a.
12. 1950 Guide at 14-308b.
13. Probably on or near the current AT location.
14. Not named in LBN, but named in SR48.
15. The 1948 AT was across the BRP from the Mills Gap Overlook, crossing below the BRP through the construction debris field, then joining an old road (the remaining portion of the “old faint wagon road” that served as the 1931 original AT south from Bearwallow Gap) that descended approximately .8 miles to VSR 695 (Goose Creek Rd.). The current AT, after a relocation that abandoned that part of the original AT, now recrosses the BRP at the Mills Gap Overlook, then follows the ridge crest as the BRP descends to the right of the ridge toward Bearwallow Gap. Shaffer’s campsite was likely on that same ridge as the current AT, on the summit just beyond the overlook.
16. Shaffer notes this day as May 15<sup>th</sup> in WWS (at 65), the only date specifically noted in that book between Georgia and Rockfish Gap, Virginia (other than a reference at 53 to his being in Damascus during the May Day celebration, presumably therefore May 1<sup>st</sup>). SR48, which is presented as a daily narrative, notes the date as May 14<sup>th</sup>, as does LBN (at 63).
17. The current AT no longer goes through Bearwallow Gap, but instead crosses Va. 43 several hundred feet north of the 1948 AT location.
18. BRP mileage from 1950 Guide at 18-4.
19. In a similar situation to the Fontana Dam relocation in North Carolina on April 17<sup>th</sup>.
20. James Wellington Luck was described in The Peaks of Otter Life and Times (by Peter Viemeister, 1992) as the “single forest/park ranger for 37 miles of park lands” in the 1940's (at p. 201). Viemeister reported that Luck was a resident of the nearby Goose Creek Valley, had “hunted and explored the Blue Ridge Mountains . . . ,” “was a former foreman at the nearby Kelso CCC camp, drove a “small green forest service truck” which served as his office, and “knew these mountains like few other men.” If attempting to locate and follow the AT, meeting Luck would be a very fortunate event since Luck would be very familiar with the relocated AT.
21. Luck had probably heard of Shaffer through BRP communication channels as a result of Shaffer’s contact with Ranger William Lord and other BRP personnel on May 8-9, 1948.
22. The other AT section missed by Shaffer that was specifically addressed by Avery was the Fontana Dam relocation.

## CHAPTER 13, CONT.

23. Shaffer noted that Processor Freer was also President of the Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club.
24. Even going so far as to accept a tentative invitation to show his slides the next autumn (LBN at 33).
25. A May 16, 1948, *Lynchburg News* article describes Shaffer's visit that day at the Peaks of Otter with the Lynchburg College general botany class, which was led by Biology Professor Ruskin S. Freer. The article noted that the visit was on Friday, which was May 14<sup>th</sup>. That establishes the date as that stated in SR48 and LBN. See Note 17.
26. Shaffer probably learned of the existence of the Apple Orchard Lookout while at the tower on Sharp Top. Since the tower man there, with the end of the fire season having arrived, had given him food, he probably hoped to get a donation of excess food at Apple Orchard Mt.
27. BRP mileage from 1950 Guide at 18-4.
28. Because of the uncertainty of construction status on the AT in that area, this report shall not consider any of the AT north to the intersection of the old AT route and the relocated AT (near the site of the current Maupin Field shelter) as possibly skipped AT mileage.
29. The original AT route (south) followed what is now VSR 684 (Chicken House Ln.) to the left at this intersection.
30. VSR 814 was slightly relocated in the course of construction of the BRP. The modern public road network in the Love area was by 1948 substantially the same as exists in the modern era.
31. This study used a 1947 Esso road map as reference.
32. The intersection of FS 306 with the BRP can be seen on Google Streetview © at Coordinates 37.883855, -79.009783.
33. That offset intersection was the result of relocation of VSR 814 in the course of BRP construction.

The eastern intersection of VSR 814 with the BRP can be seen on Google Streetview© at Coordinates 37.882052, -79.016719. That intersection is offset to the south, requiring a turn to the left (south) on the BRP, then a right turn onto VSR 814 to the west, to continue on VSR 814 past the BRP.
34. Shaffer's focus on the community of Love, and his comments in his narratives of going past it without realizing it, suggests he may have been looking for a store to resupply. There was a store (and post office) reported to be in Love in the 1938 Guide, but the post office had apparently closed in 1944. It is unknown whether a store was still operating in Love in 1948.
35. The current AT crosses the BRP at that point. The 1948 AT remained on the east side of the BRP.
36. Passing the mansion "Swanannoa," a reproduction of an Italian villa, en route.

## CHAPTER 13, CONT.

37. SR48 seems to report that Carpenter stopped to talk to Shaffer while he was camped beside the BRP.

38. Shaffer also asserted in that *News-Virginian* interview that he “couldn’t take a lift while on the trail,” stating thereby that he refused to accept motor vehicle rides that caused him to not hike sections of the AT. The record of his hike reflects, to the contrary, that he had accepted two such rides within 15 days of that interview on May 19<sup>th</sup> – one on May 4<sup>th</sup> from Fries to Galax and one on May 14<sup>th</sup> from Bearwallow Gap to Peaks of Otter.

39. Revised 1949.

40. That road appears to be the same road described in the 1937 Supplement that described the pre-Skyline Drive AT.

41. That tower was apparently built sometime after publication of the 1941 Guide (which did not mention it), but before the 1949 preparation of data for the 1950 Guide. The 1959 Guide To Trails In The Shenandoah National Park (Fifth Edition) continued to reference that observation tower.

That tower was apparently in the area obliterated by construction of I-64. The 1970 Guide (Seventh Edition) describes a relocated AT from Rockfish Gap, and notes passing the “old AT route on right at 0.39 m. (leads downhill 0.07 and provides overlook).”

42. Or the Shaffer photograph (WWS Index No. 235).

43. Other than his travel across the BRP/Skyline Drive overpass over U.S. 250 that was used by the AT, but he was likely traveling in the motor vehicle driven by the *News-Virginian* photographer at that time.

## CHAPTER 14

1. Shaffer sometimes calls the Skyline Drive the “Blue Ridge Parkway” in his narratives, which is understandable given the continuous nature and similar characteristics of the two highways.

2. While accepting of non-AT travel on his AT hike, he apparently did not extend such acceptance to other thru-hikers. He was not hesitant about commenting on such “short-cuts” he believed other reported thru-hikers had taken. In a December 27, 1955, letter to a Richard Lockey (copy found in NMAH Box 3, Folder 7) discussing AT thru-hikers, Shaffer stated his personal opinion that

Martin Papendick (of Michigan) supposedly did it [thru-hike the AT] but not too meticulously (taking some shortcuts, etc.). Mrs. Gatewood supposedly did it this past summer but I suspect her trip was similar to Martin’s.

3. While *Earl Shaffer’s 1965 Appalachian Trail Journal* (© Earl Shaffer Foundation), the daily journal of Shaffer’s 1965 AT hike, is available for reading at [www.trailjournals.com](http://www.trailjournals.com), the author is unaware of any such convenient source for review of LBN. While the *Walking With Spring* DVD published by the Earl Shaffer Foundation includes a document entitled “Earl’s Daily Journal,” that narrative is not LBN, but rather a copy of the portion of Shaffer 1948 report to the ATC (cited as “SR48” in this Report) that provided a day-to-day narrative of his 1948 hike.

## **CHAPTER 14, CONT.**

4. It is not known by the author of this report to what extent, or whether, Shaffer made the LBN available for review, or ever had it copied for circulation, during his lifetime.
5. It should be noted that on-line records of weather stations near the AT from Mt. Oglethorpe to Rockfish Gap for the period April 1 - June 1, 1948 have been obtained from the Utah Climate Center at Utah State University. A review of those records shows no rain reported at times when Shaffer reported rain, and very light rain reported during times Shaffer reported heavy rains. Shaffer may have therefore overstated even the modest rain events he did report. However, for purposes of reviewing rainfall, rain reports in SR 48 have been used.
6. It is inexplicable that once Shaffer sent his tent home in mid-April that he didn't even procure a second poncho so the two could be snapped together to provide a tarp large enough for effective protection against wind and rain.
7. Entitled by Shaffer as follows:

REPORT OF HIKING TRIP VIA APPALACHIAN TRAIL  
FROM MT. OGLETHORPE, GEORGIA (April 4, 1948)  
TO MT. KATAHDIN, MAINE (August 5, 1948).
8. Found in the ATC Archives. This same letter was discussed above in regards to Shaffer's failure to use AT Guidebooks.
9. A January 5, 1949, letter from Shaffer to Stephenson (NMAH Shaffer Collection Box 3) indicates that Avery's letter actually included two rough drafts and the final version.
10. The other AT section missed by Shaffer that was specifically addressed by Avery was the Fontana Dam relocation.
11. NMAH Shaffer Collection, Box 3.
12. And in Shaffer's papers, where Memorandum No. 3, with the attached Shaffer report, was first found in preparation of this report (Box 6).

## **CHAPTER 15**

1. NMAH Box 8, Folder 7.
2. NMAH Box 6, Folder 2.
3. The apparent copying in July 1973 of a number of older Shaffer slides, without careful cataloging and preservation of the original slide, only served to further confuse the process of identification of actual 1948 Shaffer slides.
4. That supplementation is of particular concern in the slides selected by Shaffer for inclusion in his slide presentations, since that slide show was apparently represented to be of slides he took on his 1948 hike. That collection is found in the NMAH 1948 AT Slides collection. The Shaffer Foundation DVD Slide Show features an audio recording of Shaffer showing and describing a number of, but not all, of those slides.

## CHAPTER 15, CONT.

The Shaffer Foundation WWS Index set of scans of slides (with most of the actual slides found in the NMAH Lecture Series slides) also includes a number of supplemental slides that were apparently not taken by Shaffer during that 1948 hike. It also includes several photographs that were obviously taken by Shaffer during later AT hikes because the slides feature areas that were not on the AT in 1948, but were when Shaffer took his later hikes. Since that collection was apparently assembled not by Shaffer, but rather by the Shaffer Foundation in an effort to gather, organize and catalog Shaffer's slides, there can be no inference of deliberate intent to misrepresent those supplemental slides by the Foundation. To the contrary, the Foundation is to be commended for being over-inclusive so as to preserve as many of Shaffer's slides as could be found.

5. While the Kodachrome slides taken by Shaffer generally bear frame numbers stamped on the mount, the Ansco Color and certain glass-mount slides do not. In such cases in which there is no stamped number on the mount, frame number determination requires demounting. The NMAH cooperated with this research by allowing such demounting of selected slides, but such action was requested by the author only on a limited basis.

6. Only one glass-mount slide was demounted in an attempt to determine the character of the film used. The source of the film could not be readily identified, and there was no frame number displayed on the film.

7. Other late-season foliage slides of Mt. Oglethorpe from the WWS Index collection were discussed above, as well as the apparent attempt to manipulate the image of the "sign slide" (No. 003) to mask the appearance of that late-season foliage from the image.

8. Bearing the same frame number (6), those slides suggest there were two different rolls of Ansco film used by Shaffer in taking late season (probably 1950) slides of the area.

9. The 20c frame number, with the different frame numbering method using the "c" after the number, may, however, suggest use of still another different roll of film.

10. When one looks at the next 12 slides (Nos. 013-024), which cover his hike to the Wayah Bald area, one finds all but one (No. 017) of Nos. 015-024 to be slides in "Kodachrome Transparency" mounts that were apparently not used by Kodak until May 1949. A number of the slides display late season foliage. The frame (mount number) sequence of those slides (i.e., in order, unknown, 2, 5, 9, 14, 13, 19, 12, 11) are inconsistent with a directional trip as taken by Shaffer in 1948. A number of the slides appear to be ones Shaffer described taking in 1950 in his July 17, 1950, letter to Chairman Avery.

Of Nos. 13-24, only Nos. 013 (which is apparently a July 1973 copy of an earlier slide), 014 and 017 therefore appear to be Shaffer 1948 slides.

It therefore appears that of the first 24 slides in the Shaffer slide show (as seen in the NMAH 1948 AT Slide collection), only 8 (Nos. 001, 004, 008, 007, 009, 013, 014 and 017) appear to be Shaffer 1948 slides or, in the case of 013, a presumed copy of such a slide).

Looking at the entire first carousel (Slides 001-078), there are 16 Kodachrome Transparency mount slides in that set that were apparently taken during Shaffer's 1950 "reenactment" trip, 5 glass-mount slides from an uncertain source, and 2 Ansco Color slides displaying late season foliage inconsistent with an early April photography date. Of those initial 78 slide show slides, then, only 55 can be immediately identified as 1948 slides – i.e., Ansco Color slides with early season foliage or

## CHAPTER 15, CONT.

pre-May 1949 Kodachrome Mounts with a consistent numerical mount number sequence.

11. And, as it turns out, there is no photograph of that sign, at least not taken in April 1948.

12. WWS Index Slides No. 2; DVD Slide Show No. 2; NMAH 1948 AT Slides No. 2.

13. All those glass-mount slides feature a bluish-color mount bearing what appears to be a trademark made up of a stylized “SVE” forming an inverted triangle, with the “S” and “E” forming the two sides and an elongated “V” forming the center. From internet research, this appears to be a glass mount produced by the Society For Visual Education (SVE).

14. The image includes the full height of the 38' high monument with good detail of the monument face. The author is informed that the old Retina cameras such as Shaffer used generally had “normal” (50mm) lens. From a strictly amateur point of view, it seems unlikely that such a photograph could be taken with such a “normal lens. It appears instead to have been taken with either a wide-angle lens or, more likely given the “flat angle” of the view, a telephoto lens.

The author has personal experience with taking a “summit photograph” of the Mt. Oglethorpe monument. When he undertook a Georgia - Maine hike along the AT in 1985, he began at Mt. Oglethorpe, rather than Springer Mt., for historical reasons. As might be expected, he therefore has a “summit shot” of himself, wearing his pack, at the monument. What is relevant is that the entire height of the monument was included in the image with a “wider-angle” lens (35mm) than the one presumably used by Shaffer, the image was so distant as to lose all detail. Based on the limited understanding of focal length in lens of the author, the viewpoint would have had to be even further back with a 50mm lens. When a photograph was taken showing recognizable details of the author with his pack and walking staff, only the lower portion of the monument was visible. Based on the image size and view of the monument in the Shaffer photograph, it seems from the author’s experience with photographs of that same monument that it is unlikely to have to have been taken with a “normal” 50mm lens.

The same apparent “long-lens” effect on glass-mount slides can be seen in WWS Index No. 272. That glass-mount slide (which is also apparently included on the DVD as No. 271, although with the image reversed) appears to be a view of Harpers Ferry from Weverton Cliffs. The size of the image of the bridges across the Potomac River and, in particular, the enlarged image of a ledge in the Potomac River, seems to indicate use of a telephoto lens.

15. There is a striking contrast in Shaffer’s efforts at photography in the case of the Sequoyah Lake photograph (discussed earlier) and the lack of any similar photography effort on Mt. Oglethorpe.

16. WWS Index Slides No. 3; DVD Slide Show No.32; NMAH 1948 AT Slides No.3.

17. It should be again noted that Shaffer does not describe in any of his narratives the taking of any photograph on Mt. Oglethorpe.

18. Written by Andrew H. Brown with photographs by Robert F. Sisson.

19. This can best be seen by “zooming” in to view that image on the WWS Index DVD (No. 3).

## CHAPTER 15, CONT.

20. Guide To Paths In The Blue Ridge (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 1941) at 2-1.
21. Or 2,028 miles, according to the Guide To The Appalachian Trail In The Southern Appalachians (Third Edition, 1950) at 2-1.
22. NMAH 1948 AT Slides No. 010, WWS Index Slide No. 017.
23. NMAH Box 8, Folder 8.
24. NMAH Box 6, Folder 6.
25. There is a mention in that letter of an “earlier letter” that may have discussed other locations visited. Research for this report did not locate that letter.
26. ATR-2F-192 and ATH-2F-194, from RG 145, Pickens County, Ga. Those photographs were obtained from National Archives and Records Administration, and were from the aerial photography found that was taken closest in time to April 1948.
27. Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (“GATC”) documents reviewed at the Georgia Archives in 2010 report that a “tarpaper” structure had been left behind by a military operation that was active during WWII. Such an informal structure with a dark roof would not be generally visible on an aerial photography.
28. In fact, Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (“GATC”) documents reviewed at the Georgia Archives in 2010 reported that such a “tarpaper” structure, along with extensive cast-off litter and debris, had been left behind by a military operation that was active during WWII. It is unlikely, however, that such a structure would have provided an appropriate camping location under likely high-wind conditions on the summit.

Given those GATC reports of that tarpaper structure as well as extensive debris and litter on the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe in 1948, it is notable that Shaffer fails to mention any such conditions in the LBN, the 1948 Shaffer Report, or WWS.
29. Shaffer does not report a water source at the cabin he camped at on April 3 in LBN or the 1948 Shaffer Report, but does report a “nearby spring” in WWS (at 9). That report in WWS was most likely an error, since there was a general note in both the 1942 and 1950 AT Guidebooks that there was no water on the ridge (other than a seasonal spring noted on the road to the Mt. Oglethorpe summit). It would be highly unusual in any event to find a flowing spring near a firetower (as reported by Shaffer), given the general location of such structure on high summits.
30. Guide To The Appalachian Trail In The Southern Appalachians (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 1950) at 355-56.
31. With both reporting stations being approximately 2,000' or more lower in elevation than the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe or Sassafras Mt., the temperature on those higher elevations could well have been below freezing. That would support Shaffer’s report of experiencing a very cold night and morning.
32. If, for instance, ATC acceptance of Shaffer’s thru-hike had been delayed so SR48 could be circulated to maintaining trail clubs, Georgia Appalachian Trail Club members familiar with the Amicalola Ridge would have undoubtedly immediately noticed the odd “back-and-forth” travel by

## CHAPTER 15, CONT.

Shaffer on April 3-4, 1948. In fact, the 1950 Guide (at 352) mentioned that the best way to start an AT hike at Oglethorpe if traveling on the Mt. Oglethorpe Road from Ga. 136 was to leave one's pack at the Sassafras Mt. cabin and then ride (or walk if on foot) toward Oglethorpe, climb to the summit, then walk back to Sassafras Mt. The idea that Shaffer would carry his pack from the cabin to the summit of Oglethorpe on the evening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> then return to the cabin to camp, then pack up and walk all the way back to the summit on the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> before turning back around to head north on the AT, passing the cabin again, would have undoubtedly seemed very odd to contemporary GATC members. If he left Mt. Oglethorpe on the AT headed north the evening of April 3<sup>rd</sup>, he had started his AT hike then. Why would he then backtrack 3.3 miles to Mt. Oglethorpe the next morning?

Shaffer's extraordinary mileage claim of such back-and-forth travel followed by hiking to the south slope of Springer Mt., all in one day, may have also raised eyebrows.

33. NMAH Box 8, Folder 8.

## CHAPTER 16

1. There is always the possibility that a Sequoyah Lake photograph was taken on both days, since there are (as noted in the previous chapter) film frame numbers for which slides were not located in the research for this Report. Given the striking similarity of the two descriptions, it is highly unlikely that there were two self-portrait photographs at the same location on two different days.

2. NMAH Box 8, Folder 8.

3. The presence of the large pocket on the back indicates that the photograph was taken before Shaffer made adjustments to the pack. Those adjustments, including discarding the back pocket, were mentioned in WWS (at 9). The WWS draft mentioned previously (NMAH Box 8, Folder 7) describes those adjustments as having been made on April 4 on the climb north on the AT from the Ga. 136 crossing.

4. Apparently Shaffer carried no tripod or clamp to hold the camera, but instead arranged three sticks into a primitive tripod to hold the camera.

5. The 1995 ATC edition of WWS did not feature that same photograph on the cover, but an insert image on the cover photograph appears to be the image of Shaffer from the Sequoyah Lake photograph.

6. None of the oil company road maps used by Shaffer were found in the NMAH collection, and nothing has been found in the record identifying what brand of maps were used.

7. ATH-2F-194, from RG 145, Pickens County, Ga. This photograph was obtained from National Archives and Records Administration, and was from the aerial photography found that was taken closest in time to April 1948.

8. Coincidentally, the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe also featured a circular road at that time.

9. With both reporting stations being approximately 2,000' or more lower in elevation than the summit of Mt. Oglethorpe or Sassafras Mt., the temperature on those higher elevations could well

## CHAPTER 16, CONT.

have been below freezing. That would support Shaffer's report of experiencing a very cold night and morning.

10. U.S. Naval Observatory records for Jasper, Ga., indicate that the moon was in a waning crescent phase on April 4, 1948, with 21% of the visible disk illuminated, with moon rise at 4:12 a.m.

11. Two distinctive lone peaks in that area – Sharp Top and Burnt Mt. – would have been observed by Shaffer during his April 3<sup>rd</sup> travels.

12. An idea of the impression that the cold temperatures of northern Georgia made on Shaffer can be heard as Shaffer comments at one point when narrating the DVD Slide Show in the 1980's that he thought the weather in Georgia in the early Spring of 1948 was “like Winter up here [Pennsylvania]”.

13. Guide To The Appalachian Trail In Maine, (Fourth Edition, 1942), at 174-75. The Hunt Spur Lean-to was built in 1934 by the CCC, but burnt in 1948 (Guide To The Appalachian Trail In Maine, Fourth Edition, 1953, at 255). In fact, it burned a few days before Shaffer reached that area in August 1948 (see WWS at 148).

14. With 3.0 miles traveled in Shaffer's 1937 Ford (July 17, 1950, ATC letter) to the base of the mountain and the final 0.3 miles (noted in the 1950 Guide as being undriveable) on foot.

## CHAPTER 17

- No notes -

## CHAPTER 18

1. Because this section of the AT is north of Rockfish Gap, the focus of this Report, those 3.05 miles will not be included in this Report's calculation of AT miles not hiked by Shaffer during his 1948 hike.

2. Reproduced at page 146 of The Trail Of My Life : The Gene Espy Story (Indigo Publishing Group, 2008).

## CHAPTER 19

1. At [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org). That modern standard for blazing is used in this example to place Shaffer's missed AT miles into a modern context. That 75.65 blazes-per-mile average is, however, very likely a substantially greater frequency of blazing than was present, or expected by hikers, on the 1948 AT.

2. At [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org).

3. Gordon was one of six boy scouts who reportedly hiked the AT in 1936. Unfortunately, there has been no record found of that hike that could serve as the basis to reconstruct its course of travel and dates.

That hike was generally described in a 1994 ATN article. In an apparent attempt to distinguish Shaffer's hike from the 1936 boy scout hike, that article noted that the AT was not yet

## **CHAPTER 19, CONT.**

a “completed footpath” in 1936, and that Shaffer was “credited as the first person to thru-hike the Trail as a completed footpath . . . in 1948.” In fact, the 1948 AT was, like the 1936 AT, an incomplete trail. At the time of Shaffer’s hike in 1948, there were apparently two yet-to-be-constructed sections of the AT in Virginia, including one south of Black Horse Gap and one between The Priest and Three Ridges.

As noted previously, this Report did not count those gaps in the 1948 AT as non-AT travel for Shaffer.