

Cataloochee Trail ^[1]

Cataloochee Trail

by Rosemary Clifford Neill, 2006

The Cataloochee Trail is part of the remains of a once-thriving community located in the present-day [Great Smoky Mountains National Park](#) ^[2]. The entire valley had originally belonged to Col. Robert Love, a post-[Revolutionary War](#) ^[3] speculator who, in order to hold the land, had "granted homesteads to those who would settle and improve" it. In 1814 the first recorded homestead went to the Caldwell family, followed by others to the Hannah, Bennett, Noland, Palmer, Franklin, Woody, and Barnes families. By the 1850s the community known as Cataloochee was well populated, and by 1900 almost 200 buildings dotted the cove.

In the mid-1930s, however, the families of Cataloochee were relocated as their community was incorporated into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the first park of its kind not established solely on public land. Although the Cataloochee residents received compensation for the loss of their property, many resented having to leave their homes. Some of the log houses were moved to the Pioneer Farmstead at [Oconaluftee](#) ^[4], though most structures were burned or dismantled in accordance with the park's original policy of allowing the land to revert to wilderness.

Only four houses remain along the Cataloochee Trail, one of which serves as the ranger station. The trail leads past these houses and passes the Will Messer barn, Beech Grove School, and Palmer Chapel. Dwindling down to little more than a footpath, the trail continues by Hannah's cabin and the Little Cataloochee Church and ends beyond the ruins of the apple house at the Cook place. This small array of structures is the only remnant of North Carolinians' brief but memorable tenure in the region.

References:

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Additional Resources:

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Wilt, Shirley, producer, writer, director. *Cataloochee - The Center of the World* 12:56. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. 1993. <https://archive.org/details/gov.ntis.ava19375vnb1> ^[9]

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