Gaps **[1]**

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Gaps

by John Hairr, 2006

[2]

See also: Swannanoa Gap Tunnel [3]

Gaps, often referred to as passes, are breaks or low spots along mountain ranges or ridges. If a gap is particularly precipitous and narrow, it can be designated a gorge. The term "gap" is old, having entered the English language from the Norsemen [4], gap being the Old Norse word for chasm. It is used mainly in the southeastern United States. Gaps have been important to human advancement on the continent for centuries, representing routes for transportation and communication into or away from areas that would otherwise be cut off from the rest of the world.

Most gaps in North Carolina are named for people (Gillespie Gap [5], McKinney's Gap [6]) or physical characteristics (Deep Gap [7], Roaring Gap [8]). Many gaps carry colorful names, such as Maggot Spring Gap [9], Frying Pan Gap [10], and Wildcat Gap [11]. Some of the more important gaps in the state are Deep Gap, on the Blue Ridge [12] in Watauga County [13], a key route for early settlers that is now utilized by U.S. 421; Hickory Nut Gap [14], on the Buncombe [15]-Henderson [16] County line, a primary route into the Asheville [17] region; Rabun Gap, in Georgia, a route used by settlers coming into the extreme southwestern portion of the state; Soco Gap [18], an important pass used by the Cherokee Indians [19] to cross the Balsam Mountains [20]; and Swannanoa Gap [3], on the McDowell [21]-Buncombe [15] County line, a pass for travelers headed into the Asheville area that is

now utilized by Interstate 40.

Additional Resources:

Unveiling of Monument at Gillespie Gap, NC Postcard Collection, UNC Libraries: http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/nc_post/id/10789 [22]

Image Credit:

A glimpse of the canon [sic] from Pine Gap April 14, 1910 Frank W. Bicknell Photograph Collection, PhC.8, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC., call #: PhC8_280. Available from http://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/2744935322/ [2] (accessed July 20, 2012).

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