

Frank and Calla Bell Trail Park

HONORING HISTORY AND HERITAGE

ABOUT BELL TRAIL PARK

Located at the western end-point of the Pacolet River Scenic Byway in southeastern Henderson County, the Bell Trail Park property was purchased by Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy in December 2016. In partnership with Henderson County, CMLC plans to develop a passive recreational park that is uniquely situated to offer the public outdoor recreational opportunities featuring dramatic views across the Upper Green River Gorge, while also highlighting the history and heritage of the region. The park has been named in honor of Frank “Chief” Bell Sr. and his wife, Calla, who were pioneers in founding several of the region’s historic summer camps, from Camp Mondamin just upstream at Lake Summit to Camp Green Cove which began at what is now Rockbrook Camp in Brevard. The property also offers views of three historic engineering marvels from the late 19th and early 20th centuries including the “High Bridge”, the Saluda Grade Railroad, and Duke’s cypress penstock flume. CMLC is now seeking private donations to develop recreational amenities such as trails, and to install interpretive information regarding the special historic setting of this new Henderson County park.

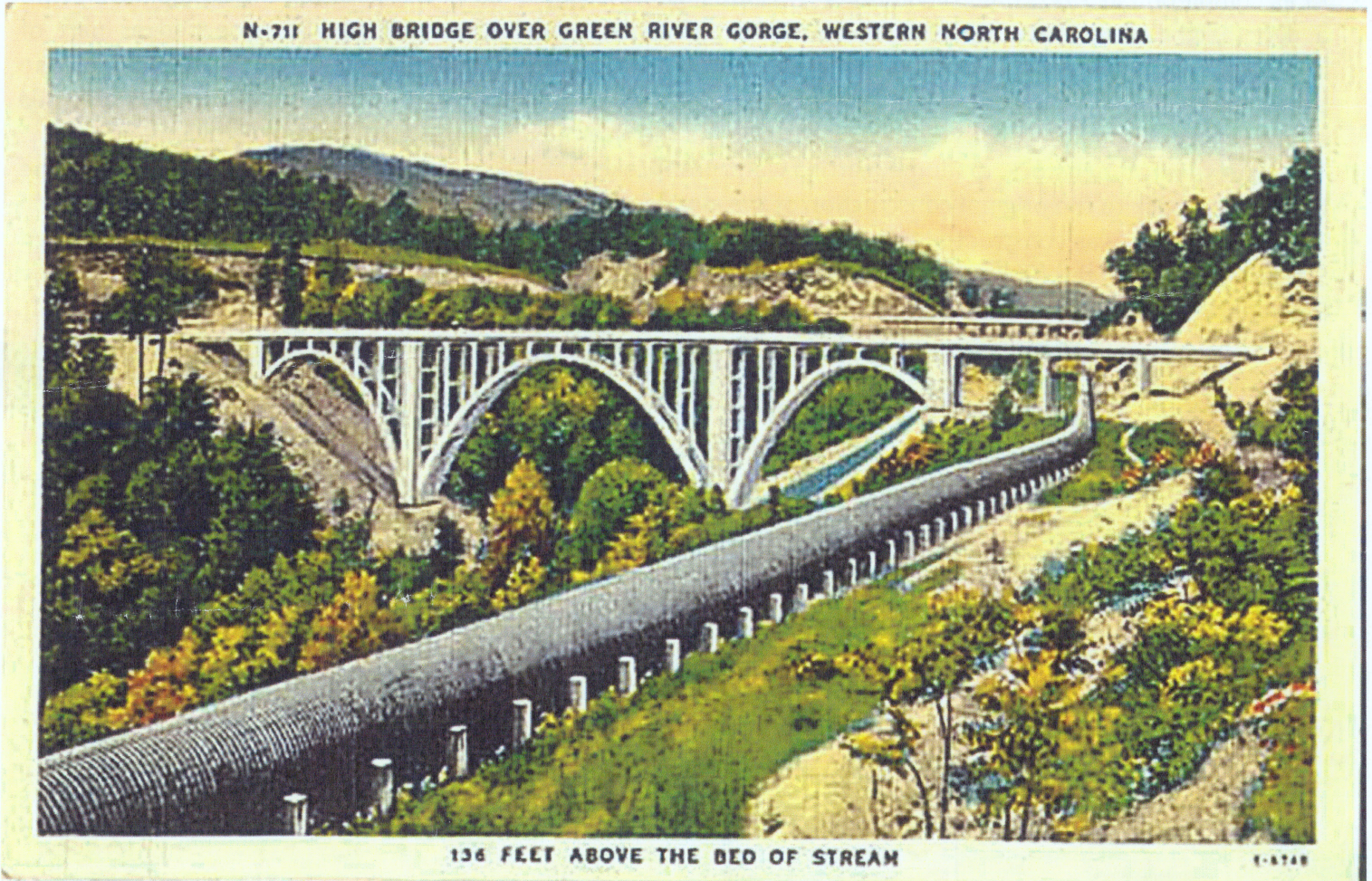


IMAGE FROM AN HISTORIC POSTCARD DEPICTING THE 1927 HIGH BRIDGE OVER THE GREEN RIVER AND THE CYPRESS FLUME CONSTRUCTED IN 1920

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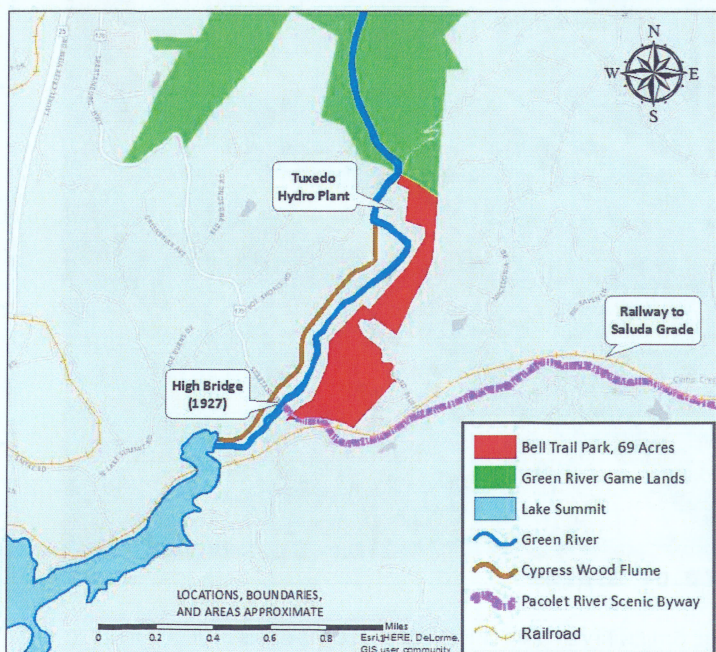
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UNIQUE HISTORY OF THE AREA

Western North Carolina is blessed with an abundance of historic summer camps that draw campers from across the United States and abroad. In an increasingly urbanized and technological world, the summer camp experience affords young people with a connection to the natural world that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to explore. It provides them with lessons in community, character building, and critical thinking that are crucial to developing the next generation of community leaders and conservationists. Frank “Chief” Bell founded one of the earliest summer camps in the region, Camp Mondamin, just upstream from the Park on the shores of Lake Summit in 1922. Since then, Camp Mondamin, and later its sister camp for girls, Camp Green Cove, have been continuously operated by Chief and Calla Bell and members of the Bell family to offer these opportunities to thousands of young people across the globe.

In addition to honoring the summer camping heritage of the region, interpretive signage will provide information regarding the 3 unique historic structures that are visible from vantage points throughout the Park:

- At its completion in 1927, the “High Bridge” was the highest bridge of its kind east of the Mississippi River, with a deck height more than 132 feet above the Green River. When a new bridge was proposed as part of improvements to Highway 176 in the late 1990s, local residents rallied to successfully campaign for the preservation of the High Bridge and its dedication to the public. Pedestrian access onto the bridge now provides scenic vantage points to view the cypress penstock and the river flowing through the gorge below.
- The cypress wood penstock, or flume, carries water from Lake Summit to the Tuxedo hydroelectric station. The flume dates back to the original construction of the station which began operating in 1920.
- The Saluda grade was constructed in the 1870s and remains the steepest standard gauge railway in the United States. Visible from the Park’s entrance, the Saluda grade plunges down the blue ridge escarpment toward the Piedmont east from the Park at an average grade of 4.24% . It has not been used for rail traffic since 2011.



FUNDING BELL TRAIL PARK

Funds Raised to Date:
\$920,000

Remaining Needed to Complete
Projects:
\$40,000