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## Historic Heritage Trail: Upper Loop

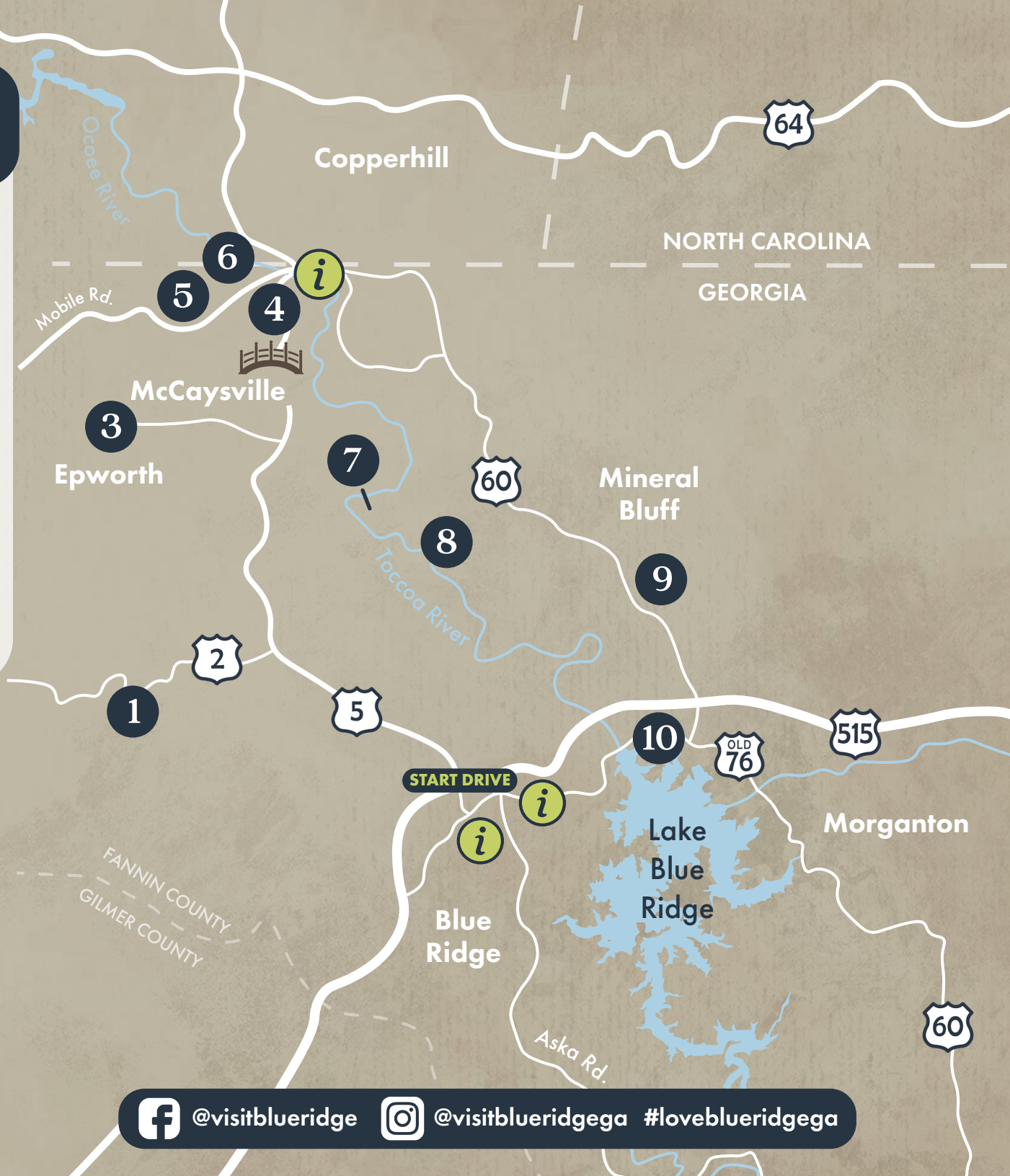
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## 1. McKinney House & Crossing & Higdon

3121 Hwy 2, Blue Ridge, GA

Mike McKinney is considered the Founding Father of Blue Ridge. His father, James, purchased the grist mill and landed on Fightingtown Creek around 1853. Mike and his wife resided with his parents until he built a house and established a store across the road from his house. In 1864, the McKinney stores and mill were burned to the ground during the Civil War. Later, he moved his family to land southeast of Chestnut Gap, to what is now known as Blue Ridge.

## 2. Mt Moriah Baptist Church & Higdon

4127 Hwy 2, Blue Ridge, GA

Mount Moriah Church was established in 1852 in the Higdon community. The cemetery is the final resting place for many early settlers, notably the Higdon family, after whom the community is named.

## \*Side Trip - Hell's Holler, Devil's Den and Cashes Valley

Hell's Holler, named for its rowdy reputation and because moonshine was made there. Devil's Den, nearby, was also a lawless and notorious section of Fannin County. Today, you're more likely to find a horse stable than a moonshine still in Cashes Valley.

## 3. Historic Epworth & General Store

Madola Rd, School House Church St, Old Epworth Rd, Epworth, GA

The town of Epworth has been known by several names. It was first called Fightingtown by the Cherokee Indians, and later called Camp Ground, because of the camp meetings held there prior to 1900. In the 1850's, the main road through the community, Madola Road, housed many businesses such as a trading post, black smith, a carpenter shop, and also a grist mill that was powered by a dam. Near the grist mill was a pond that held many baptisms by the local churches. In 1897, a post office was established called Atalla, and for four years it took that name. In 1901, both the post office and the town's name changed to Epworth, after Epworth, England, birthplace of the founders of Methodism, Charles and John Wesley. The General Store was built in 1938 and was at some point named the Vestal's Store. When the elementary school burned down in the 1940's, the store served as a makeshift classroom for the students until the new school was completed.

## 4. Historic McCaysville & Copper Basin

Hwy 5 & Toccoa Ave, McCaysville, GA

The rustic little town you see today used to be land as far as the eye could see until the discovery of copper across the river in the Copperhill, TN region in 1843. As mining operations grew, so did the population, requiring a need for restaurants, shops, and medical care for miners and their families, and both towns grew along with industry. Ironically, the town of Copperhill, TN was once called McCays, TN, and McCaysville was known as Hawkinsville. Herbert McCay obtained the majority of land in the area through land grants, and McCays, TN was established in 1876. In 1908, it was renamed "Copperhill" when the post office located near the Mary Mine in the Copper Hill locality, moved closer to the

Tennessee Copper Company acid production plant. In 1913, McCays was formally renamed and incorporated as Copperhill, TN. When McCays was becoming Copperhill, the town across the river and state line, called Hawkinsville, was renamed as McCaysville, GA, and incorporated as such in 1904. Because the population spread across the border, a blue line was painted through town as a visual divider between the states.

McCaysville, Copperhill and Ducktown are all part of the Copper Basin, which was mined until the late 1980's. The Burra Burra Mine, one of the largest mines that operated in the area, is located in Ducktown, TN, not far from Copperhill. The mining companies used smelting to separate the copper from the rocks and cut timber to fuel the smelters. The smelting process released gases containing sulfur, which mixed with water vapor in the air to create sulfuric acid. This resulted in acid precipitation in the Copper Basin area, leaving the entire landscape around both McCaysville and Copperhill resembling a moonscape until the late 1970-1980's.

## 5. Folk Collaborative

2984 Mobile Rd, McCaysville, GA

This business is dedicated to preserving and sharing the region's rich traditions of herbal medicine. Originally founded as a small family-run operation, it's grown into a well-known destination for those seeking natural remedies and a deeper connection to Appalachian heritage. Specializing in handcrafted tinctures, teas, and herbal products, Folk Collaborative sources many of its ingredients locally, using time-honored methods passed down through generations.

## \*Side Trip - Mobile Road

Mobile Road is unique, not only does it change names, but it takes you through Tennessee and Georgia several times. The Mobile community was named after an old copper mine, this area had 3 pre-Civil War mines – Sally Jane, Number 20, and Mobile.

## 6. Crestlawn Cemetery

2597 Mobile Rd, Copperhill, TN

This cemetery, maintained by the First Baptist Church of McCaysville, is a well-preserved burial site known for its scenic location. The cemetery offers a panoramic view of Big Frog Mountain, a prominent peak visible from various points across Georgia and Tennessee. Crestlawn serves as a final resting place for many local families and reflects the area's rich history. Its elevated position and natural surroundings make it a notable landmark.

## 7. Old Toccoa River Railroad Bridge

105 River Hills Rd, Mineral Bluff, GA

The bridge was once part of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad's Cincinnati to Atlanta mainline. It is a historic structure of Fannin County. Today the bridge serves as a passage for the Blue Ridge Scenic Railway.

## 8. Curtis Switch

50 N Toccoa River Rd, Mineral Bluff, GA

Near this crossing where the bridge is located, the Curtis family

once owned a large farm. Sometime in the early 1900's, it was the site of a train collision. Back in those days, there was no means of communication between trains, only at the depot stops. Operators at the depots in Blue Ridge, GA and Copperhill, TN would telegraph each other when a train pulled into the station. When a train was ready to leave the station, each Conductor, once given the all-clear, was alerted to give the go-ahead to the Engineer for the train to safely leave the depot, providing safe passage on the same track between the two. They would then notify the other depot when a train pulled out of the station. Unfortunately, one time communication failed to reach each other, and both trains departed out. The trains collided not far from this intersection, either heading north from Blue Ridge or south from Copperhill. Following the collision, a sidetrack, or "switch", was installed nearby so trains could pull onto the sidetrack to allow another train to pass, and the intersection became known as Curtis Switch. Nowadays, there is constant communication between the depot, train Conductors, and Engineers, making train travel a much safer mode of transportation.

## 9. Mineral Bluff Depot

150 Railroad Ave, Mineral Bluff, GA

Three attempts to build a railroad initiating out of Atlanta finally came to fruition more than a decade after the end of the Civil War. The line had reached Canton, GA by 1879. As the rail line extended northward into Fannin County, the Mineral Bluff Depot was built in 1887 by the Marietta and North Georgia Railroad to serve as a passenger and freight terminus along the route, which continued onto Nashville and Louisville. Although the town of Mineral Bluff had already been established prior to the railroad, the rail line designating the town as a destination stop brought not only tourists looking to spend time in the mountains and health spas, but brought in commerce, such as timber, mining, and tannery companies as well, and Mineral Bluff prospered in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Passenger service to the town ended in 1949, and the freight transport ended sometime in the late 1950's and fell abandoned for years. The structure saw renewed interest, and in March 2007, the depot was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

## 10. Blue Ridge Dam

291 N. River Rd, Mineral Bluff, GA

Built in 1930, the Blue Ridge Dam is one of the largest earth dams in North America. It creates a stunning 1,500-acre lake with 100 miles of shoreline, 80% of which is surrounded by the beautiful and protected National Forest. The dam, managed by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), plays a crucial role in controlling the lake's water levels. To ensure safety and environmental balance, the TVA lowers the lake levels at specific times throughout the year for maintenance, flood control, and power generation. This historic landmark continues to be an integral part of the region's natural landscape and energy infrastructure.

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