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Historic Heritage Trail: Lower Loop

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“Start Drive” at the intersection of Hwy 5 and Hwy 515/US 76 in Blue Ridge, Georgia.

1. Blue Ridge Dam

291 N River Rd, Mineral Bluff, GA

Built in 1930, the dam creates a stunning 1,500-acre lake with 100 miles of shoreline. The dam is managed by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and 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.

Head east on Hwy 515/US 76 for 2.6 miles. Turn right onto N River Rd. Destination will be on the right.

2. First County Seat Courthouse – Morganton

Bypass Rd Morganton, GA

Fannin County was established in 1854 by merging portions of Gilmer and Union Counties, and the county seat was situated in the town of Morganton because it was as close to the middle of the new county as possible. Because it had become cumbersome and time-consuming for visiting politicians to take a horse and buggy ride from Blue Ridge to the courthouse in Morganton, the county seat was moved in 1895 to be closer to the train depot. The building then served as a school for a few years, and the structure reportedly burned to the ground, but little is known of an exact date or cause.

From Blue Ridge Dam, continue on N River Rd for .5 miles, take a sharp left onto Old US 76. Go 2.3 miles and turn right on to Bypass Rd. Destination is to be in this general area.

3. Chastain House

Dial Rd, Blue Ridge, GA

Jason Coward Chastain, with his wife Mary Ann (Polly) Rogers Chastain, took possession of the property following the Indian Removal Act of 1830, building a small, one bedroom log home in the 1840's (no longer on property). They had several children but their daughter, Alice, died of Diphtheria at the age of 10. Sometime following the death of their daughter, the family built the current “Big House” between 1850-55. During inclement weather, the Chastain Family graciously offered one of the downstairs rooms as a place for neighbors to use as a viewing room for deceased family members as roads were almost impossible to traverse. One time during the Civil War, one of Jason's daughters, Sarah, hid her sweetheart in the “smoke house closet” in the loft by the chimney while Union soldiers searched the house. Through the years, the home has

served as a family dwelling and a school and is reportedly haunted. Historic info available on plaque in front of white 2-story home. Property is a private resident and is only viewable from the road.

From First County Seat, continue on Bypass Rd for .2 miles and turn right onto GA 60 S for 10 miles. Turn right onto Dial Rd, go 1.3 miles, destination will be on the right.

4. Davenport-Cochran Homestead & Crossroads at Dial 2350 Dial Rd, Blue Ridge, GA

The home is a “two-over-two, modified dogtrot” design. The property was originally owned by Fannin County pioneer Lewis Van Zant, built in 1885. Around 1920, the family moved to the larger Cochran home. All of the outbuildings still exist today, including a large apple house perched atop a root cellar, a smoke house for curing and preserving meats, a large corncrib to dry and store corn, along with a working barn built of tough-hewn lumber.

From the Chastain House, continue on Dial Rd for 1 mile. Davenport - Cochran Homestead will be on the right. From the Homestead, continue for .25 miles, Crossroads at Dial will be on left. Historic plaques will be located at Crossroads.

5. Van Zandt Home & Old Dial Post Office

Dial Rd, Blue Ridge, GA

The land that this house sits on was purchased by Lewis Van Zandt in 1834 from William Downs of Effingham County (near Savannah), a revolutionary war veteran who had won the 160-acre parcel of land in the 1832 Georgia Land Lottery. In 1832, Van Zandt drove a Conestoga wagon pulled by six horses from North Carolina, bringing his wife Elizabeth to their new farmstead. In the family's first year on the land, they lived in the wagon as they built a log cabin with the help of the indigenous Cherokee. The original log cabin is still part of the structure of this home 185 years later. The old shed to the left of the house is said to house the original Conestoga wagon. Lewis and Elizabeth had 10 children while residing on the farm. Lewis died at the age of 86 in 1888, preceded by his wife Elizabeth in 1882. They are buried in the VanZandt Cemetery not too far from here.

The small building near the road was once utilized as a Post Office for the area, closing in 1971. Notice the small letter slot on the side of the building.

From Crossroads at Dial, continue on Dial Rd for approximately .5 miles. The Old Post Office sits on the road to the left with home just behind it.

6. Noontootla Creek Farms

3668 Newport Rd, Blue Ridge, GA

NCF is part of a 1,300-acre property once inhabited by Creek and Cherokee Indians. Andrew Jackson's victory over

the Creeks during the War of 1812 helped remove the Creeks. The Georgia lotteries of 1832 and 1833 involved Cherokee lands. A separate lottery in 1832 distributed forty-acre “gold districts” for \$10 each in the same Cherokee area. The fee associated with a land lottery draw win was usually around \$18.00. The combined acreage of several lottery land recipients here was eventually purchased by the Owenby Family in 1954 and is owned by the same family to this day. At one time there was an old mill downriver, where a few of the original millstones can be found. One of those millstones is now an ornamental part on the outside wall of The Mill Restaurant, and another is the used on the fireplace inside. *For a side trip, ask your server about the voting and vegetable stand just down the road.

From Van Zandt Home, go back the direction you came on Dial Rd, turning right on to Newport Rd. Destination will be 3.6 miles ahead to the right.

7. Shallowford Bridge

Aska Rd, Blue Ridge, GA

Built in 1918, this steel bridge was constructed for people to cross where the Toccoa River meandered through land that is now under the waters of Lake Blue Ridge. Prior to the lake being filled after the dam completion in 1930, the bridge was dismantled and relocated here, not far upstream from a crossing in the Toccoa River. In the years prior to 1918, you would cross the river on foot, or with horse and wagon. A brand-new bridge now parallels the historic one.

From Noontootla Creek Farm, go back the direction you came on Newport Rd for 3 miles. Turn left onto Aska Rd and go 4.7 miles. Destination will be on the right.

8. Stanley Creek Church

250 Harrison and Ada, Blue Ridge, GA

The Stanley and Garland family were among the first U.S. citizens to move to this valley in the early 1800's and soon became known as the Stanley Settlement. The church was used for religious purposes on weekends, and school during the weekdays. If there was an emergency, death, or something else the community needed to know about, the bell would be rung and people would come eager to see what was needed. The bell could be heard from 2.5 miles away.

From Shallowford Bridge, continue on Aska Rd for 1.9 miles, turn left onto Harrison and Ada. Destination will be ahead to the left. Historic plaque located behind church.

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