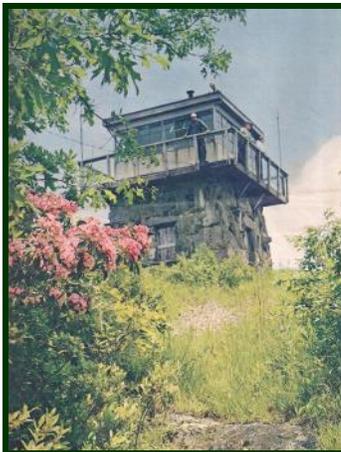


# The Vintage Rabun Quarterly

## High Elevation History

### Inside this issue

- Geography Quiz
- Pickens' Nose



The rock-based fire tower on top of Rabun Bald in 1968.

- Please visit our museum and research library on Mondays and Fridays from 10:00 until 2:00 and on Wednesdays from 12:30 until 4:30.
- Group tours by appointment

Rabun County's own Rabun Bald is Georgia's second highest mountain. With an elevation of 4,696 feet, it is only 88 feet lower than the highest, Brasstown Bald, but it is not nearly so easy to get to the top of Rabun Bald. Brasstown's nice paved road leads to a parking lot and visitor center. There is even a bus to take you to the summit observation tower. By contrast you get to the top of Rabun Bald on foot, there are no recreational facilities, and many times hikers can experience the summit in solitude.

Rabun Bald is one of many bald summits found primarily in the Southern Appalachians. They are covered mostly by thick vegetation of native grasses or shrubs occurring in areas where heavy forest growth would be expected. Why some summits are bald and some are not is a mystery. Rabun Bald's main ridgeline is the Eastern Continental Divide. From this divide waters drain northward into the Little Tennessee River and ultimately the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. Streams on the south side of the divide drain via Warwoman Creek to the Chattooga River, then to the Savannah River, and finally to the Atlantic Ocean.

A stone structure on the summit of Rabun Bald provides hikers with spectacular views that, on clear days, extend for more than 100 miles. The structure was the first fire tower in the area. It was constructed by Ranger "Nick" Ni-



"Preacher" Parsons at the elevation marker on Rabun Bald.

cholson, the first forest ranger in Georgia, and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) men at the GA-F6 Camp Warwoman in the 1930s. The CCC men also ran telephone lines from tree to tree up the mountain to establish communication with the tower. The tower had a glass-walled room that the United States Forest Service operated as a fire tower until the early 1970s. After the fire tower was taken out of service, a crew dismantled the metal-framed enclosure that sat on top of the stone base. Leaving the stone base intact, the crew replaced the metal cabin with the railed wooden observation platform which hikers enjoy today.

Earl "Preacher" Parsons, who was the U.S. Forest Ranger on the Tallulah District in the 1960s, built the road to the summit and drove the first Jeep to the top in 1942. It was an extremely rough four-wheel-drive road in 1942, and is much worse now after years of erosion and wear. The road is no longer vehicle-friendly, but is used regularly by hikers.

Before the road was built, there was just an old skid trail where timber men hauled out their logs in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The road intersects with the famed Bartram Trail that crosses the summit.

A historical note about Rabun Bald is the Bald Mountain School that was located on the mountain and was the highest school in Georgia. The "1914 Survey of Rabun County Schools" states that the one-room log cabin enrolled an average of 12 students in 8 grades. The only teacher in 1914 was Miss Ethel Ritchie of Rabun Gap. The school was eventually consolidated with the Dillard School.



Bald Mtn. School - 1936

Yet another interesting and little-known story involves a plane crash during World War II. On August 15, 1944, six fliers were killed in the crash of a B-25 bomber on the steep flank of Rabun Bald. The bomber was on a night cross-country flight from Greenville Army Air Base in South Carolina. There was an intensive ground and air search on the mountain to discover the wreckage and bodies.

Rabun Bald may be second to Brasstown Bald in elevation, but its historic interest is second to none.

# The History Behind the “Nose”

In the Nantahala National Forest, hovering at 4,880 feet, 2,000 feet above Rabun’s Betty’s Creek Valley, stands the easily identifiable mountain called Pickens’ Nose. Who is this Pickens, and why is his nose memorialized in a mountain’s name?

Andrew Pickens was a dour Scotsman born in Pennsylvania in 1739. After migrating through Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley, he eventually settled in upland South Carolina on the Seneca River, now part of Lake Hartwell.

During the French and Indian War in 1761, when the British were fighting the French for control of the American colonies, 22-year-old Andrew Pickens helped the British Colonel James Grant fight the Cherokees. They were attempting to rescue the besieged men at Fort Loudon in what is now Tennessee. The rescue did not succeed, however, and the men were massacred after surrendering to the French and Cherokees. A short time later somewhere



Pickens’ Nose, a familiar site to motorists driving north on Highway 441 in Rabun Gap

Pickens’ most famous battle was the defeat of British Colonel Tarleton at Cowpens, South Carolina in 1781, which turned the tide for American forces in the South. He was promoted to Brigadier General by the state of South Carolina.

Andrew Pickens also led a campaign in North Georgia against the Cherokees late in the Revolutionary War. It led to the tribe ceding significant portions of land between the Savannah and Chattahoochee Rivers. In 1785, he was responsible for the treaties with Indian tribes that removed them completely from South Carolina. In spite of his

military campaigns against them, the Indians respected him and called him “The Wizard Owl.” Andrew Pickens would also later serve as a member of the U.S. Congress from South Carolina’s Sixth District.

The Indian fighter and Revolutionary War patriot now has counties named for him in Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina, as well as a fort in Florida. Those memorials are not as impressive, however, as the great mountain shaped like Andrew Pickens’ prominent Roman nose. Very near his Cherokee victories of the eighteenth century and looming on Rabun’s northern border with North Carolina, the great mountain stands as a permanent memorial to pioneer courage, patriotism and public service.



General Andrew Pickens

Pickens also emerged as a military leader during the American Revolution, first in expeditions against the Cherokees who had allied with British loyalists. This new alliance with the British the Indians saw as a way of keeping settlers from overrunning their territory. In 1779, Andrew Pickens distinguished himself in a battle against British General Sir Henry Clinton. He and his patriot militia of 300 men defeated a British force of 800.



A hiker on the rock outcrop at the summit of Pickens’ Nose

# Geography Quiz



1. This mid-1950s photo is the view from which mountain?
  - A. Glassy Mountain
  - B. Tiger Mountain
  - C. Black Rock Mountain
2. Which stop on the Tallulah Falls Railroad was the highest elevation on the line and also the site of the Eastern Continental Divide?
  - A. Dillard
  - B. Rabun Gap
  - C. Mountain City

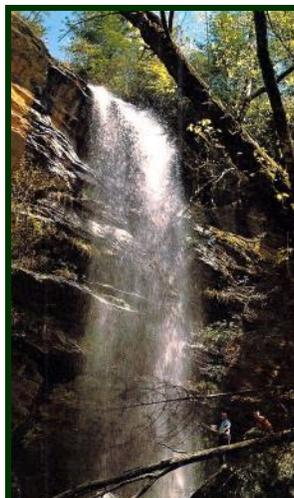
3. This photo is circa 1920 and shows the confluence of which rivers?
  - A. Coleman and Tallulah
  - B. Tallulah and Chattooga
  - C. Tiger Creek and Tallulah
4. The Wolfork Valley is named for the "Wolf Fork" of which river?
  - A. Little Tennessee River
  - B. Tallulah River
  - C. Coleman River

5. Which of the waterfalls pictured below was never used to produce hydroelectric power?
  - A. Estatoah Falls
  - B. Stekoa Falls
  - C. Mud Creek Falls

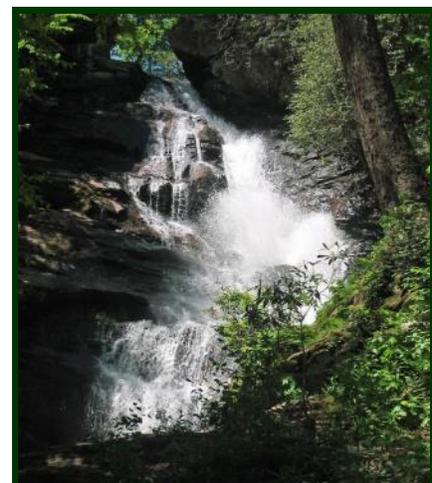
Answers:  
1. C  
2. C  
3. B  
4. A  
5. C



Estatoah Falls, c. 1925



Stekoa Falls



Mud Creek Falls

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*Coming This Winter: A new slide show on  
Moonshine showing on the "big screen."*

We're on the web!  
[www.rabunhistory.org](http://www.rabunhistory.org)



**A moonshiner in Tiger with his still, 1950s.**