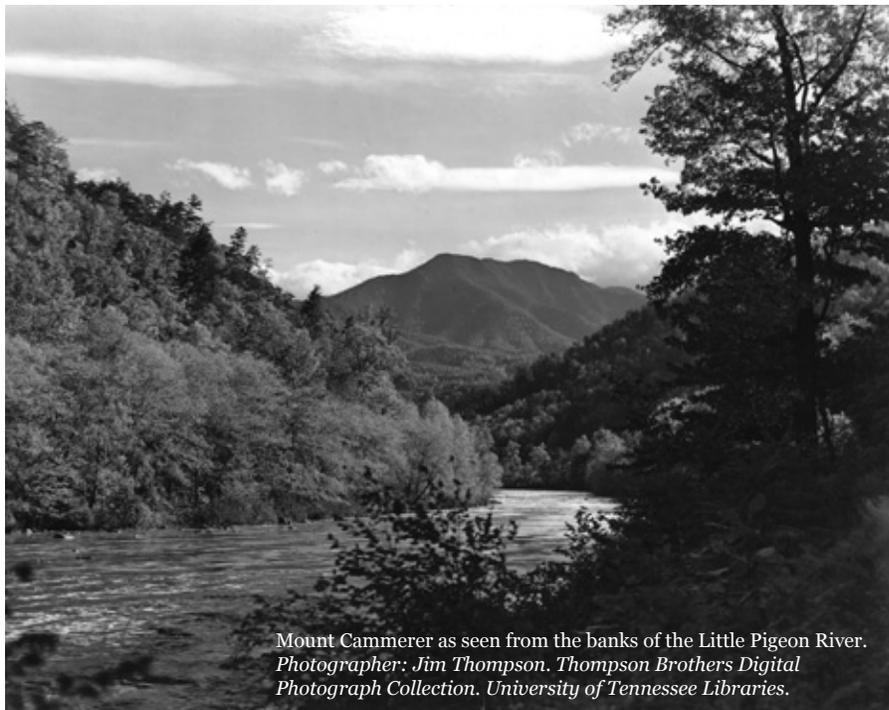


GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS Colloquy

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Mount Cammerer as seen from the banks of the Little Pigeon River.
Photographer: Jim Thompson. Thompson Brothers Digital
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“The Great Possibilities of Doing Something Worth While for Humanity”

THE PARTNERSHIP OF ARNO CAMMERER AND JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR.

My heart is wrapped up in this eastern park proposition, and particularly the Great Smoky Park, because of the great possibilities of doing something worth while for humanity that is involved....

(Cammerer to Rockefeller, Jr., Aug. 12, 1927)

MOUNT CAMMERER IN THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS SITS ASTRIDE THE state line between Cocke Co. in Tennessee and Haywood Co., North Carolina. The peak was named after Arno B. Cammerer, Director of the National Park Service (NPS) from 1933 to 1940 whose commitment and tireless efforts resulted in the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

On Newfound Gap, five miles west of Mount Cammerer, stands the Rockefeller Memorial affixed with a bronze plaque bearing the inscription: “For the permanent enjoyment of the People—This Park was given one-half by the peoples and states of North Carolina and Tennessee and the United States of America and one-half in memory of Laura Spelman Rockefeller by the



Tower on White Rock (Mount Cammerer), November 24, 1940. Photographer: Albert “Dutch” Roth. Albert “Dutch” Roth Digital Photograph Collection. University of Tennessee Libraries.

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Left: John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1917. Library of Congress. Photographer: Harris and Ewing.

Right: Arno B. Cammerer. Library of Congress. [no date] Photographer: Harris and Ewing.

Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial funded by her husband John D. Rockefeller.” The Rockefeller Memorial, like Mount Cammerer, straddles the boundaries of the two states.

The unpublished letters between Mr. Rockefeller and Mr. Cammerer (as they politely referred to each other throughout their 13+ year correspondence) reveal the dedication, humanity, vulnerability, and affection of the philanthropist Rockefeller and the public employee Cammerer as they worked with a sense of urgency to protect the Smokies through the creation of the national park.

Cammerer began his career in the federal government in 1904 and subsequently, in 1919, he was recruited to the newly-formed NPS. Cammerer later commented: “I accepted their offer at considerable financial sacrifice, and solely because the great opportunities for real public service in the national park field appealed to me. I have never regretted the step that I took...” (Cammerer to Ickes as quoted in June 19, 1940 Press Release, Dept. of Interior).

During Cammerer’s tenure as director, the NPS expanded more rapidly than at any time in its history. When Cammerer stepped down as director in 1940, the Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, praised Cammerer’s many significant contributions during his 36 year career and opined that perhaps Cammerer’s “most outstanding achievements were the creation of the Great Smokies National Park and the Shenandoah National Park.” (Ickes to Cammerer, June 18, 1940) Cammerer echoing this same thought about the importance of the Smokies gave all the credit to Rockefeller: “I consider the establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which you saved for posterity, the most completely satisfying achievement of the past ten years with which I was connected.” (Cammerer to Rockefeller, July 17, 1940)

Cammerer was instrumental in allaying the fears of critics who said that the Smokies did not measure up to the standards

of a national park, determining the boundaries of the new park, and most critically, while “on leave” from the NPS, securing a \$5M gift from the Rockefellers. At the same time, he negotiated an agreement with

the Little River Lumber Company to halt timbering in one of the more scenic areas of the Smokies. He wrote: “It was thought by the lumber people that I would not be able to mark this line until May or June, but I went into the mountains the next two days in snow and rain, and climbing several peaks over 5,000 feet in height to get my bearings, and established the line then and there...” (Cammerer to Kenneth Chorley, Rockefeller’s Associate, April 4, 1929)

Letters exchanged between the two men—some formal or confidential and others, informal greetings and cards—reveal a trust they had in each other. In a passionate letter to Rockefeller, Cammerer conveyed the urgency of protecting the Smokies from the lumber companies and the value of a park in the East: “They will be the outstanding scenic areas where those from the congested centers of population, the workers at the machines in the lots and mills, the clerks at the desk, and the average fellow of the small town may....get the recreation and inspiration that his more fortunate brothers now get out of a visit to the Yellowstone and Yosemite.” (Cammerer to Rockefeller, Aug. 12, 1927).

Rockefeller initially pledged \$1M toward the establishment of the park, but when he learned that Major Welch, who chaired the organization responsible for raising private moneys, had done nothing to secure funds other than the pledges from Rockefeller and Henry Ford, he withdrew his \$1M pledge and arranged a \$5M gift from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Foundation. This gift paved the way for the immediate establishment of the national park in the Smokies. Carlos Campbell later wrote that David Chapman, Chairman of the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association, and other park leaders “gave complete credit to Mr. Cammerer for obtaining

the movement-saving gift; Cam in turn gave Colonel Chapman full credit for 'selling' Mr. Rockefeller and his staff of investigators on the soundness and honesty of the project..." (*Birth of a National Park*, UT Press, 1960, p. 61)

Secretary Ickes declared that Cammerer "sacrificed his own health in his devotion to duty." Following Cammerer's first heart attack in 1939, Rockefeller sent him a check for \$1,000 to help cover medical expenses. As a public employee, Cammerer was concerned that Rockefeller's gift might seem improper and thus he returned the check. Rockefeller, however, found a more subtle route—sending a \$2,000 gift to Mrs. Cammerer. When Cammerer resigned as director, he was immediately appointed Director of Region 1—a less strenuous position but one responsible for all national parks east of the Mississippi. Less than a year later at age 57, Cammerer died following another heart attack. Again, Rockefeller stepped in to help the Cammerer family because he thought "so highly of him and because Mama and I had such a warm feeling for Mrs. Cammerer." (Rockefeller, Jr. to Nelson Rockefeller, June 16, 1941)

In a 1942 Easter greeting to Rockefeller soon after the naming of Mount Cammerer, Mrs. Cammerer wrote that the Smokies were her husband's "very favorite park."

Climb up to the lookout on Mount Cammerer and be entranced by the panoramic views of Cammerer's "very favorite park." Ponder, too, the unique partnership and warm friendship of these two men and the "worth while" legacy that they and others have left us.

—Janet McCue

Janet McCue is a researcher, Kephart historian, and recently retired Cornell University librarian. She is the co-author of the introduction to the 2011 edition of Horace Kephart's classic *Camping and Woodcraft* (Great Smoky Mountains Association, 2011).

SOURCES: Except for the Chorley letter which is in the National Archives (RG 79, Records of Arno B. Cammerer, 1922-1940), all quotes are from letters in the Rockefeller Archive Center either in the Rockefeller Family Collection, Cultural Interest Series or the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Foundation collection. For more information about the establishment of the GSMNP, see Daniel S. Pierce's excellent book, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (UT Press, 2000). *Worthwhile Places: Correspondence of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and Horace M. Albright* is a selection of letters that captures a similarly close relationship between John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and Horace M. Albright, Cammerer's predecessor and the 2nd director of NPS (Fordham University Press for the Rockefeller Archive Center, 1991).



White Rock (Mount Cammerer) seen from the Appalachian Trail, November 24, 1940. *Photographer: Albert "Dutch" Roth. Albert "Dutch" Roth Digital Photograph Collection. University of Tennessee Libraries.*

New on the Smokies Bookshelf

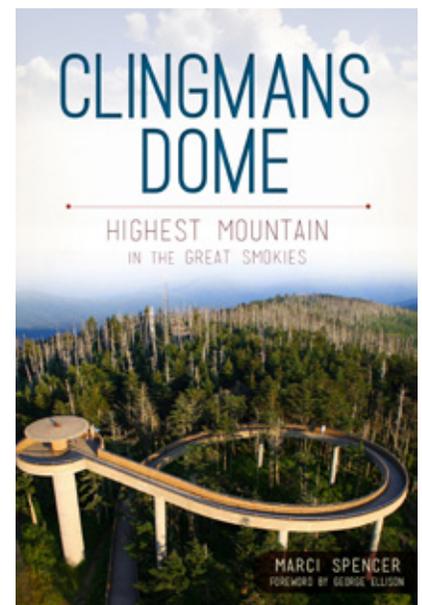
Spencer, Marci. *Clingmans Dome: Highest Mountain in the Smokies*. Foreword by George Ellison. Natural History Press, 2013.

IF EVER ASKED "WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER most about Clingmans Dome?" most of us would respond with a comment about the concrete tower that sits on the summit of the Dome or perhaps something about the magnificent beauty of the Smoky Mountain scenery. We would likely be hard pressed to offer anything more. But this all changes with the publication of Marci Spencer's *Clingmans Dome: Highest Mountain in the Great Smokies*.

Marci Spencer has compiled an informative and entertaining account of the highest peak in the Smokies, outlining the natural history of the mountain, tracing the adventures of the early explorers to the Dome, and

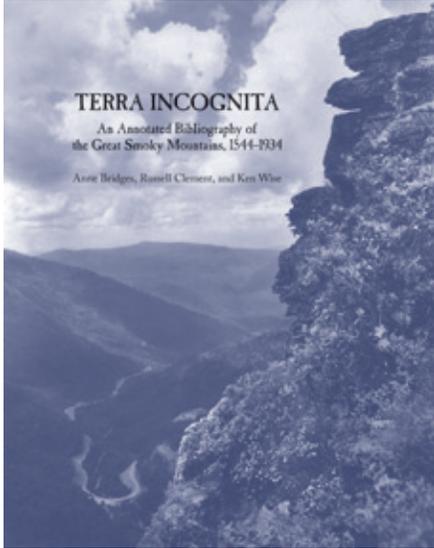
chronicling the arrival in turn of the pioneering settlers, the lumber companies, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the invasive species, and the National Park. Each of her story-lines is built around a foundation of historical and factual detail finished by an up-to-date commentary on current conditions on the Dome. Ms. Spencer lavishly augments her narrative with photographs and line drawings illustrating both the mountain's past and its natural phenomena.

While *Clingmans Dome* is a fascinating landmark to read about, it is surely a place to be visited. Accordingly, Ms. Spencer affords descriptions of trails in the vicinity of the Dome for the would-be explorer as well as detailed sketches identifying the rows upon rows of peaks and mountains visible from the Clingmans Dome Observation Tower. *Clingmans Dome* is the perfect book for the armchair or actual visitor to the Smokies.



News from the Smokies Project

Terra Incognita: We are very pleased to announce the upcoming publication of *Terra Incognita: An Annotated Bibliography of the Great Smoky Mountains, 1544-1934* by University of Tennessee Press. Expected to be available in December of this year, *Terra Incognita* is the culmination of fifteen years of research by Smokies Project co-directors Anne Bridges and Ken Wise and their former colleague Russ Clement. The bibliography includes all the writings on the Smokies that the editors could unearth by searching through material in many libraries and archives,



paper indexes, online databases, and other bibliographies. The writings cited and annotated describe the area before the formation of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and detail the build-up to the creation of the Park. Each of the thirteen subject chapters is accompanied by an essay that explains the material included in the section. For more information, visit: utpress.org/titles/.



Database of the Smokies (DOTS): As this issue of the Colloquy goes to press, we are preparing to add to DOTS records for all the images in the various digital collections offered by the Great Smoky Mountains Regional Project through the UT Libraries. As well as the image records, we will soon be adding all the records for the books in the Great Smoky Mountains Regional Collection. The Collection includes rare items as well as new and classic books on the Smokies. Together they bring the total of the database to over 6000 items. But there is still room for more. If you would like to contribute to the database, you can go the website (dots.lib.utk.edu), create an account and add your citations.

Together DOTS and *Terra Incognita* will provide interested individuals with a wealth of information on the Smokies, spanning over 400 years of human activity.

A Preview from *Terra Incognita*

"Notes Here and There." *The Wilson Bulletin* 37, no.3 (September 1925): 182-6. From p. 183 in its entirety:

Mr. Orpheus M. Schantz, of Chicago and Berwyn, Illinois, conducted a party of sixty tourists into the Great Smoky Mountains of eastern Tennessee during July, 1925. The party traveled in three Pullman coaches and enjoyed the reputation of being the largest party which has yet visited this famous proposed national park site. Mr. Schantz says that many of the party were interested in birds, and a list of fifty species was made on the trip. The expedition was composed mainly of members of the Chicago Geographical Society.



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