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New River Trail State Park (Foster Falls)
Austinville to Shot Tower Map - Blaze Color:



1. GPS: Lat. 36° 51.056, Lon. -80° 55.181

MP 28.8: Austinville was an important stop on the line from Pulaski to Galax from the time rail was first laid in the valley. The area's mining and smelting operations were operating at a very large scale and provided employment for many Welsh immigrants and others who were drawn to the area. The railroad often brought the mines Northern owners and investors from their homes along the steep hillsides in Pulaski.

2. GPS: Lat. 36° 51.225, Lon. -80° 54.85

MP 28.4: One of the two tunnels along the trail, this one passes through a limestone outcropping right on the river. In this picture from the 1940s you can see how much the area has changed. The pole supporting the "telltals" is long gone, however one can still imagine the trains thundering through the tunnel. Telltals were a row of strips of tarred rope or other material hung above a railroad to warn anyone on top of a car that the train is approaching some low clearance, such as a tunnel. During the earlier days of railroading, brakemen would often walk along the top of the moving trains to check the brakes and the condition of the cars. Many a brakeman's life was saved by the "touch" of the telltals.

3. GPS: Lat. 36° 51.69, Lon. -80° 54.38

130' Bridge over Buddle Branch Creek

4. GPS: Lat. 36° 52.231, Lon. -80° 52.334

Trail passes under the twin spans of Hwy 77.

5. GPS: Lat. 36° 52.225, Lon. -80° 52.214

MP 25.2: Between the Interstate 77 bridge and the Jackson's Ferry bridge you will see the historic Shot Tower. The Tower is located within the Shot Tower Historic Park (see Park Amenities). Built in 1807 by Thomas Jackson, an English immigrant, the 75 foot high tower, and a 75 foot deep shaft into the hillside below it, combined to form a 150 foot drop with a pool of water at the bottom fed by a side tunnel from the New River. Molten lead mined from the Austinville mines was poured through a sheet of metal with sized holes so that, as the molten material fell, it would cool and solidify into perfectly sized spheres, or shot, to be used in ammunition and for other purposes.

6. GPS: Lat. 36° 52.193, Lon. -80° 52.217

Shot Tower Historical State Park: From I-77 in southeastern Wythe County, take Exit 24 and go east .2 mile on VA 69 to VA 52. Go left and travel 1.5 miles on VA 52 to Shot Tower entrance, on left.

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