

"If you can give people memories, it's special."

POLL KNOWLAND, Table Rock State Park manager



A walk around Pinnacle Lake on a new trail that's opened at Table Rock State Park includes spectacular views and plenty of places to enjoy them. KEN C

TRAIL · COMES FULL CIRCLE

Table Rock path that was started
70 years ago now complete

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There's something new afoot for Upstate residents who enjoy easy hiking and mountain scenery just a 40-minute drive from downtown Greenville.

The Civilian Conservation Corps started building a trail around Table Rock State Park's centerpiece Pinnacle Lake in 1941. A half-mile stretch from the park boathouse to just beyond the park's historic mountain lodge was completed before work was interrupted by World War II.

Seven decades later the circle has been

completed, taking hikers on a 1.9-mile circle tour around the lake with spectacular views of Table Rock and some previously seldom-seen park property.

The new 1.4-mile section, funded through a state parks grant, starts at the parking area for picnic shelters 1 and 2,

TAKE A WALK

Hear **Poll Knowland** talk about Table Rock State Park by clicking on the video with this story at GreenvilleOnline.com.

See **TRAIL**, Page 5A

TRAIL

Continued from Page 1A

which is the new trail head for the loop.

It's an easy walk, with one short moderate section where steps go up a hill on the original section of trail. Benches all along the trail offer places to rest and enjoy the view.

"It's picturesque the whole way," said Valerie Aartun, who lives nearby in Pumpkintown and enjoys the walk almost every day. "There are all kinds of critters — birds, deer, squirrels and chipmunks. For people who are into birds, this is a great place to be."

The beginning of the new trail is a mulch-covered walkway along the south side of the lake. Eventually it turns to dirt, but unlike the older section and more typical hiking trail, the surface is smooth, free of tree roots and is wide enough for hikers to walk side by side. The new section of the trail accommodates bicyclists as well.

A section in wetlands was hand dug without the aid of equipment, and a low wooden bridge crosses a small, unnamed stream surrounded by mountain laurel and rhododendron.

"This just explodes in the spring with ferns and flowers," said Poll Knowland, the park manager.

Along with the scenery, the trail is a lesson in history. From the wetlands, the trail runs to the top of the Pinnacle Lake dam, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Knowland points out drill marks etched into the edges of hand-hewn rectangular rocks lining the side of the spillway. Workers earning \$1 a day drilled into the rock by hand, inserted white pine pegs and poured in water. The white pine soaked up the water, expanded and split the rock, he said.

"Those were the depression years," Knowland said. "That's our heritage. These people ended up being some of the best stone masons in the Upstate."

VALERIE AARTUN, who lives nearby in Pumpkintown

The trail winds down from the dam to a bridge that crosses Carrick Creek below the 54-foot-tall granite rock dam. A veil of water cascades across the face of the rock. It was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps to resemble a natural waterfall and is one of Aartun's favorite places on the loop.

The new trail ends near the waterfall view and the older trail completes the loop, coming back up by the dam and running past the park lodge, where Marion Gilstrap of Pickens often comes to fish under the watchful eye of his little Pekingese dog, Thomas.

Gilstrap, 69, remembers coming here with his father and older brother, who have both passed away. He catches trout in the lake, but said he comes mainly for the view and the memories.

Making memories is what this trail and the park is all about, Knowland said.

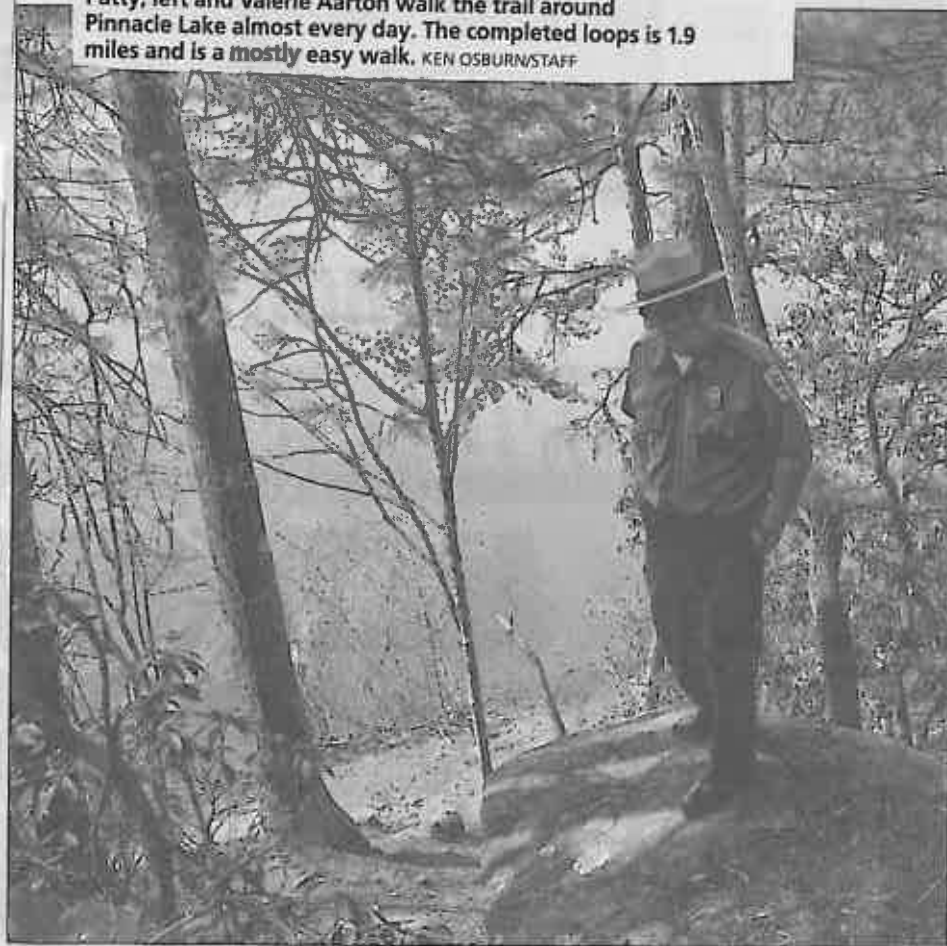
"If you can give people memories, it's special," Knowland said. "I see families walking this trail and kids having a ball. Those are memories and those kids will have that all their lives."



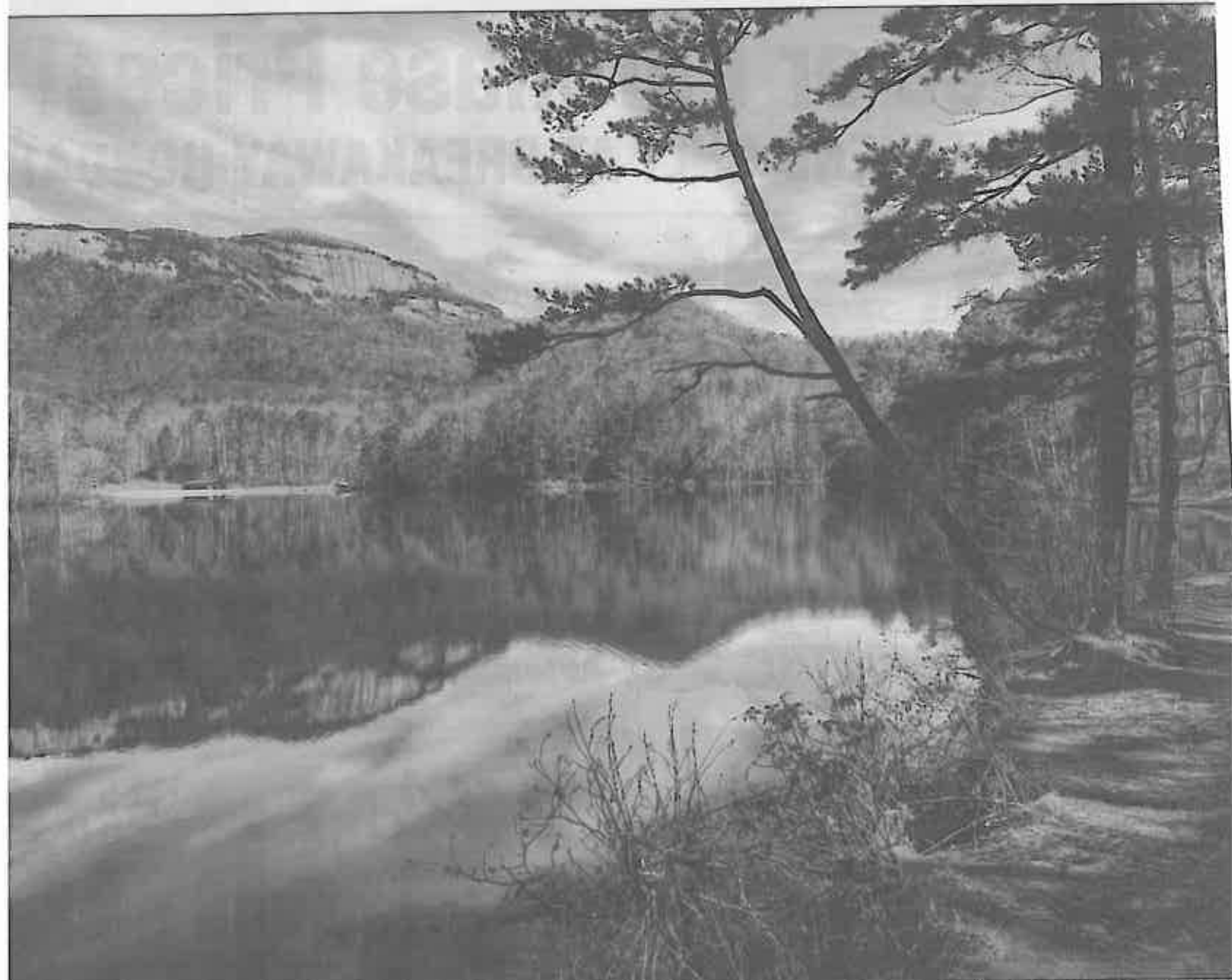
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Patty, left and Valerie Aartun walk the trail around Pinnacle Lake almost every day. The completed loops is 1.9 miles and is a mostly easy walk. KEN OSBURN/STAFF



Poll Knowland, park manager, visits a favorite spot on the trail. The loop connects the park boathouse with a historic mountain lodge. KEN OSBURN/STAFF



A new trail now open at Table Rock State Park was started by the Civilian Conservation Corps 70 years ago, but never completed after federal funding dried

up. KEN OSBURN/STAFF