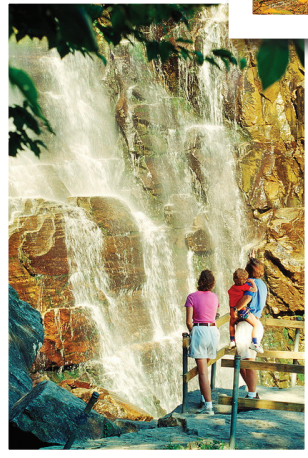


© Jim Proctor 2008

A revered escarpment, now a state park: The first visitors to Chimney Rock Park, a naturalist destination under the ownership and inspiration of Dr. Lucius Morse, arrived more than a century ago by horseback from train stations in Hendersonville or Rutherfordton. After clattering across a bridge over the Rocky Broad, they would thread their way up the mountain to the giant “chimney” of a rock with its surrounding 75 mile view of the gorge, Lake Lure and the surrounding mountains and

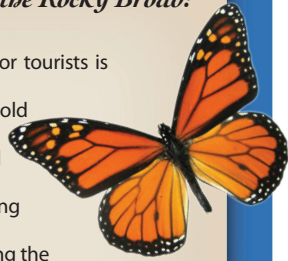


Sharing a splendid world of rushing water, forest paths and stunning views, the Park and the Town of Chimney Rock welcome naturalists of any age.

Since 2007 owned by the state of North Carolina, continues to attract nature lovers of every stripe—ornithologists, biologists, students, hikers, picnickers, rock climbers, teachers and families in search of waterfall, whip-poor-will or winding path. For complete information about this eco-destination of great note, hours and rates, go to: www.chimneyrock.com.

River walking by the falling waters of the Rocky Broad:

Chimney Rock’s long-time status as a magnet for tourists is immortalized in the “flashback” mural of an old postcard, painted by Amy Wald, at the east end of the town’s Rocky Broad River Walk. It’s a fitting exclamation point to a 20 to 30 minute stroll along the bouldered river, with its rock bridge out to an island and



plenty of places to sit, relax and enjoy the conversation of rushing water.

Mural by Chimney Rock Resident and Artist Amy Wald

Slow dancing down Main Street: Stopping over in Chimney

Rock, whether it involves a trip into the Park or not, necessarily involves a relaxation of modern civilization’s grip and a recognition of the time-



Chimney Rock’s main street, wedged between ridge and river, unfailingly renders a sense of life in a less complicated time zone.



honored qualities of milling about, lounging and leisurely enjoying the displays of small shops and the good taste of comfort foods in iconic restaurants like the Old Rock Café. Chartering a night in a Chimney Rock, Lake Lure or Bat Cave inn sets up a two day excursion into leaving the rest of the world behind, always with one lingering question: “Hmmm, why don’t we stay a little longer?”



HANDMADE in AMERICA



www.handmadeinamerica.org

HandMade in America
SMALL TOWN
REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

NORTH CAROLINA

Established

1991

CHIMNEY ROCK

AN OPEN INVITATION TO A LARGER-THAN-LIFE

Landscape

CHIMNEY ROCK
at a Glance

Population (July, 2009):
166
(-3.9% since 2000)

Median Age:
38.8 years

Median Household
Income (2008):
\$32,434

Median House/Condo
Value (2008):
\$181,488

Cost of Living Index (Dec. 2009):
85
(U.S. average is 100)

Zip Code: 28720

No bigger than a minute, the town of Chimney Rock nevertheless presides over a timeless scene--of falling water, sheer rock face and evergreen forest. Even the names of its neighboring towns—Bat Cave and Lake Lure—suggest the inherent fairy tale quality of this place, a gravitational draw for naturalists and sightseers for well over a century.

But Chimney Rock is unquestionably real geography and, for its 170 residents, a changing canvas that—year to year—reveals ever deeper layers of natural beauty.



Visitors enjoy walking, fishing and picnics along the Rocky Broad River, which rolls right through Chimney Rock Village.

“We incorporated as a town in 1991,” says Barbara Meliski, mayor and long-time team member of the town’s Community Development Association (CDA). “Since then, we’ve made so many improvements—developed a two million dollar water system, added streetlighting and public restrooms, designed and built our river walk—the town’s appearance is just much better.”

Through all the years of steady improvements, there have been seasons of stormy times too, particularly in 1996, when the Rocky Broad River crested its banks in a “hundred year flood” that closed the road through town and shuttered the valley.

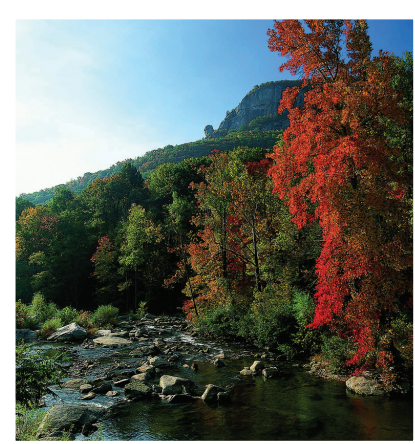
“Working with HandMade and our friends in Bakersville who sent emergency funds, we dug out from the flood damage, applied for a USDA Forestry grant, and started making plans for landscaping and a scenic river walk,” says Barbara.

“Teaming with Pat Cabe and David Quinn in the early years of HandMade’s Small Towns Program was an inspiration,” she recalls. “They were eager to help a bunch of folks who didn’t know what they were doing. We went about creating a cookbook of things we wanted to accomplish. It was all very reasonable and compassionate—they never once set us up for failure.”

Befriending the Rocky Broad

Early assessments of Chimney Rock’s assets were clear in pointing to “under-utilized” riverfront in the town, the same tumbling water visitors to Chimney Rock Park drive across to enjoy the natural treasures of the park’s thousand acre preserve.

Partnering with town merchants, with the Park, with HandMade and others, the CDA coordinated the town’s purchase of land needed to gain access to the river, then went about shaping and landscaping a system of steps, small bridges and pocket parks adjoining the banks of



The Rocky Broad River, an inveterate chatterbox of a river, lures passersby with flowing and timeless stories.

the chattering, pooling, falling Rocky Broad. Early on, some 300 students from Warren Wilson College worked on the project, helping build steps from Main Street to the river.

More than 10 years since the river walk first took shape, it remains an enticing experience in the heart of town, enhanced with benches and native plantings, ramps and rock bridges, near Chimney Rock’s public restrooms and parking lot, additional initiatives of the CDA. An east-end picnic park, finished in 2000, blends the river scene with a welcoming place to meet, relax and wade in the shallows.

“The town is lovely thanks to the many good volunteers



**Accomplishments:
Chimney Rock renewal since 1996**

Beautification:

- Master landscape plan
- Tree plantings throughout town (ongoing)
- Recovery from the Rocky Broad River flood of 1996
- Mural at entrance to River Walk as part of an ongoing series.

New Businesses:

All Chimney Rock buildings occupied.

Public Areas & Facilities:

- Creation of a municipal service district, leading to the purchase of new streetlights and the renovation of public restrooms
- New public parking lot, picnic park and pocket park
- Downtown (2002) and west end (2007) water projects, an investment of over \$2 million
- Rocky Broad River Walk, first opened in 1998
- Grassy amphitheater above Main Street, finished in 2010.

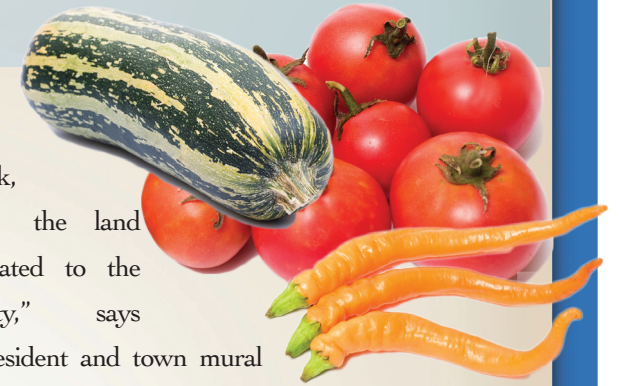
Investments:

In private funding, \$4,383,013; in public money, \$640,678.

Volunteer time and jobs created:

More than 17,400 volunteer hours related to CDA projects and 53 jobs created.

For further information: Barbara Meliski, mayor, Chimney Rock Village (828-625-9000) or Amy Wald, president, Chimney Rock Village Community Development Association (828-625-1805).



“HandMade brought us together—residents, merchants, Park management, all striving for the same thing—and helped us create a ‘leader-ful’ community.”

—Mary Jaeger-Gale, long-time Chimney Rock resident and CDA team member, general manager of Chimney Rock Park.

who pitch in with planting trees, picking up trash, sodding pocket parks, hanging decorations, keeping things green,” says Barbara. “We’re a mom and pop town, definitely, and we’ve gotten a lot accomplished, little by little, with help from friends like HandMade and the North Carolina Rural Center. They’ve helped us find funding and get things done.”

owned Chimney Rock Park, use of the land was donated to the community,” says

CDA President and town mural artist Amy Wald. “Working with The Friends of the Hickory Nut Gorge, we are in our second year and have built an artistic garden shed and compost pile, as well as adding an updated watering system.” Up

A community garden, an amphitheater, a view toward eco-tourism

ridge from the town’s parking lot, another CDA initiative invites multiple use—a hillside amphitheater, A volunteer landscaping crew plants “a future” of natural beauty along Main Street. liberally landscaped with northern bayberry, witch hazel, butterfly weed, fire bush and other native perennials, with three grassy tiers of seating for up to 140 people and a cement pad for performances.



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A volunteer landscaping crew plants “a future” of natural beauty along Main Street.

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hazel, butterfly weed, fire bush and other native perennials, with three grassy tiers of seating for up to 140 people and a cement pad for performances.

“Here you are,” says Amy, “staring right at Hickory Nut Falls where Last of the Mohicans was filmed. I can’t imagine a more scenic panoramic backdrop for weddings, plays, town gatherings, and film showings.

“Our town is part of that same dramatic eco-system that attracts tourists to the park and we want all of our visitors to completely relax while they’re here. It’s just a beautiful place to visit—and, especially, to call home.”



Chimney Rock Park’s severe and beautiful bluffs, part of the film Last of the Mohicans, as seen from the town’s new amphitheater.