

Exploring the **APPALACHIAN TRAIL**

HIKES in the MID-ATLANTIC STATES

Maryland Pennsylvania New Jersey New York



GLENN SCHERER & DON HOPEY

Pine Knob to Pen Mar County Park

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HIKE #3

Pine Knob to Pen Mar County Park

Map: PATC Md. # 5

Route: From US 40 over Pine Knob to Annapolis Rock, Black Rock, Quirauk Mt., High Rock, and Pen Mar County Park

Recommended direction: S to N

Distance: 17.8 mi. total; 17.7 mi. on AT

Elevation +/-: 1250 to 1890 to 1250 ft.

Effort: Easy

Day hike: Optional

Overnight backpacking hike: Yes

Duration: 12 hr.

Early exit options: At 8.3 mi., Wolfsville Rd. (MD 17); at 11.8 mi., Raven Rock Rd. (MD 491)

Natural history features: Annapolis Rock, Black Rock Cliffs, and High Rock vistas; Devils Racecourse boulder field

Social history features: Site of Black Rock Hotel; Pen Mar County Park; Mason-Dixon line

Trailhead access: *Start:* From I-70E, take the Myersville exit. Turn R on Wolfsville Rd. (MD 17), then L on US 40. Overnight parking is located on US 40 at a pull-over spot just before the I-70 overpass. From I-70W take the US 40S exit, cross the I-70 overpass, and park at overnight pull-over spots. *End:* From I-81, take PA 16E. Turn R onto PA 418, and L onto Pen Mar Rd. (PA 2008) to Pen Mar County Park. Day parking for several cars at park gate or overnight in lot inside park.

Camping: Pine Knob Shelter; Pogo Memorial Campsite; Hemlock Hill Shelter; Devils Racecourse Shelter

The three fine, west-facing vistas of Annapolis Rock, Black Rock, and High Rock plus a peculiar river of stone called the Devils Racecourse are the highlights of this hike through northern Maryland. This AT section, mostly along the flat-topped South Mt. ridge, makes for a fun, easy 17.7-mi. overnight trip, with camping at Hemlock Hill Shelter (8.2 mi.). The walk can also be neatly divided into two day hikes of 8.3 mi. and 9.4 mi., with the midpoint coming at Wolfsville Rd. (MD 17).

From US 40's hiker parking area,

walk the blue-blazed side trail for 0.1 mi. to its intersection with the AT. Turn right and follow the white blazes north, away from the I-70 footbridge and the deafening road noise. This superhighway replaced the quiet, electric Frederick-Hagerstown interurban trolley, which first penetrated this mountain pass in 1904 and ran until 1938. The trolley not only carried freight and passengers but offered a romantic transportation adventure to farm families who had rarely traveled beyond their small, rural communities.

The trail seems to pass quickly from the 20th century back into the 19th as it crosses under US 40, then takes an old woods road past a farmhouse and overgrown fields. As the path slowly climbs, the traffic sounds fade away and are replaced by bird-song.

At 0.5 mi., a blue-blazed trail leads left for 0.1 mi. to Pine Knob Shelter. This lean-to boasts not only a nearby spring, a privy, and a nifty fold-down dining table, but also, perhaps, its own resident ghost. A thru-hiker named Okeepa claims in a shelter registry entry to have been frightened right out of his polypropylene underwear by the ghost. We witnessed no evidence of the haunting during our visit, though we did experience a refreshing chill as we stepped out of bright sunlight into the shelter's gloom.

The AT continues climbing on the woods road until it crests at Pine Knob (0.9 mi.), where it achieves the top of South Mt. (elev. 1714 ft.). While there is no view here, you may want to keep your eyes open for pink lady's-slipper (also called moccasin-flower because of its shoe shape). Blooming in late May or early June, this showy woodland orchid at one time could be found growing by the hundreds along the AT. However, collectors who picked it and failed in their home garden replanting attempts have diminished its numbers.

The next 7.2 mi. offer a gently undulating ridge walk through a chestnut oak forest. Two views along



Glenn Scherer

Pine Knob Shelter

the way are not to be missed. Annapolis Rock (2.2 mi) is reached by turning left onto a blue-blazed side trail (0.2 mi.). Black Rock (3.2 mi.) is only 40 yd. to the left of the AT, and is reached by several short, unmarked paths.

Both of these spectacular crags include rock slabs, overhanging cliffs, small caves, tumbled boulders, and views that look west across a wide farm valley toward Hagerstown. Four states—Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Virginia—plus the oddly named hamlets of Mousetown, Smoketown, Bagtown, and Jugtown are all visible from the heights. The jagged, exposed quartzite ledges at Annapolis Rock and Black Rock form much of the erosion-resistant bedrock of South Mt.

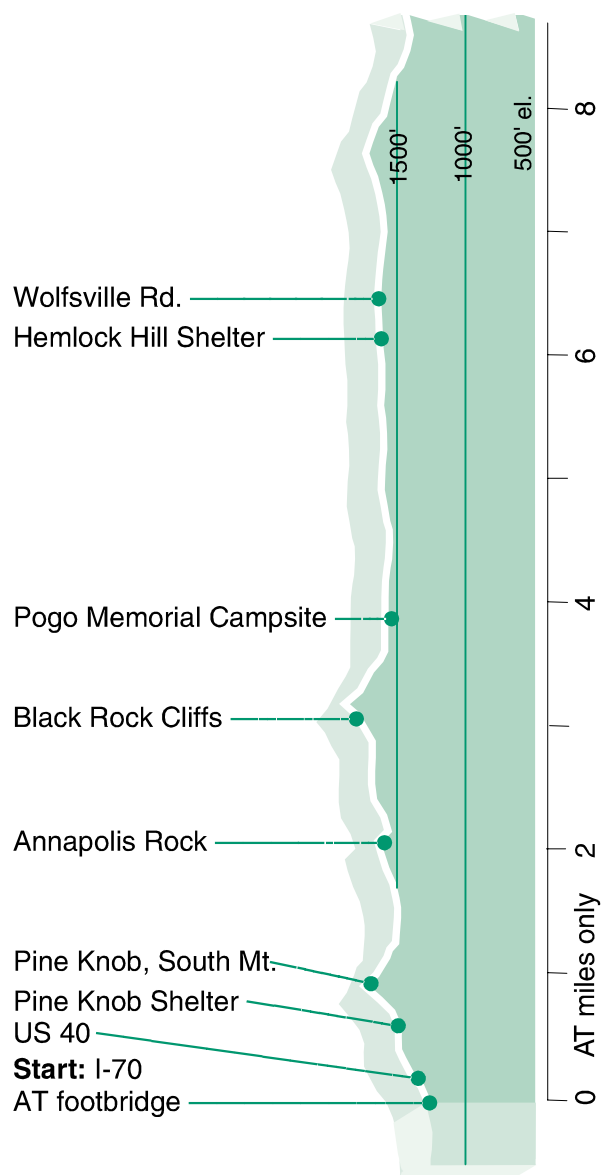
The view from Black Rock has brought picnickers to the spot for 200 years. In *The Blue Hills of Maryland*, Paula Strain recounts 19th-century

Independence Day festivities that took place near the viewpoint. According to one account of these parties, the Declaration of Independence was read and a fiery oration delivered, followed by “thirteen regular toasts to correspond to the thirteen original states. . . . [More toasts] were proposed and drunk as long as a man was left with sufficient sobriety to guide his glass to his lips” (p. 210). One wonders how these tottering “Sons of Liberty” ever safely guided their wagons down from South Mt. at day’s end. Perhaps their wives took the reins.

Just after Black Rock, the trail descends on a woods road to the Pogo Memorial Campsite (3.9 mi.). Located near the site of the Black Rock Hotel, this tenting site, with its spring and privy, was named for Mountain Club of Maryland member Walter “Pogo” Rheinheimer, a sixteen-year-old trail maintainer who drowned in a Potomac River canoeing accident near Harpers Ferry. The hotel, now long gone, was built in 1907 as a summer resort by a successful salesman of tapeworm patent medicine, Jacob Duell Wolfe. It was too remote to attract sufficient customers, and it burned down in the 1920s. Gravel Bagtown Rd. descends left (west) for 0.9 mi. to a trailhead on White Oak Rd. (just off Crystal Falls Rd.).

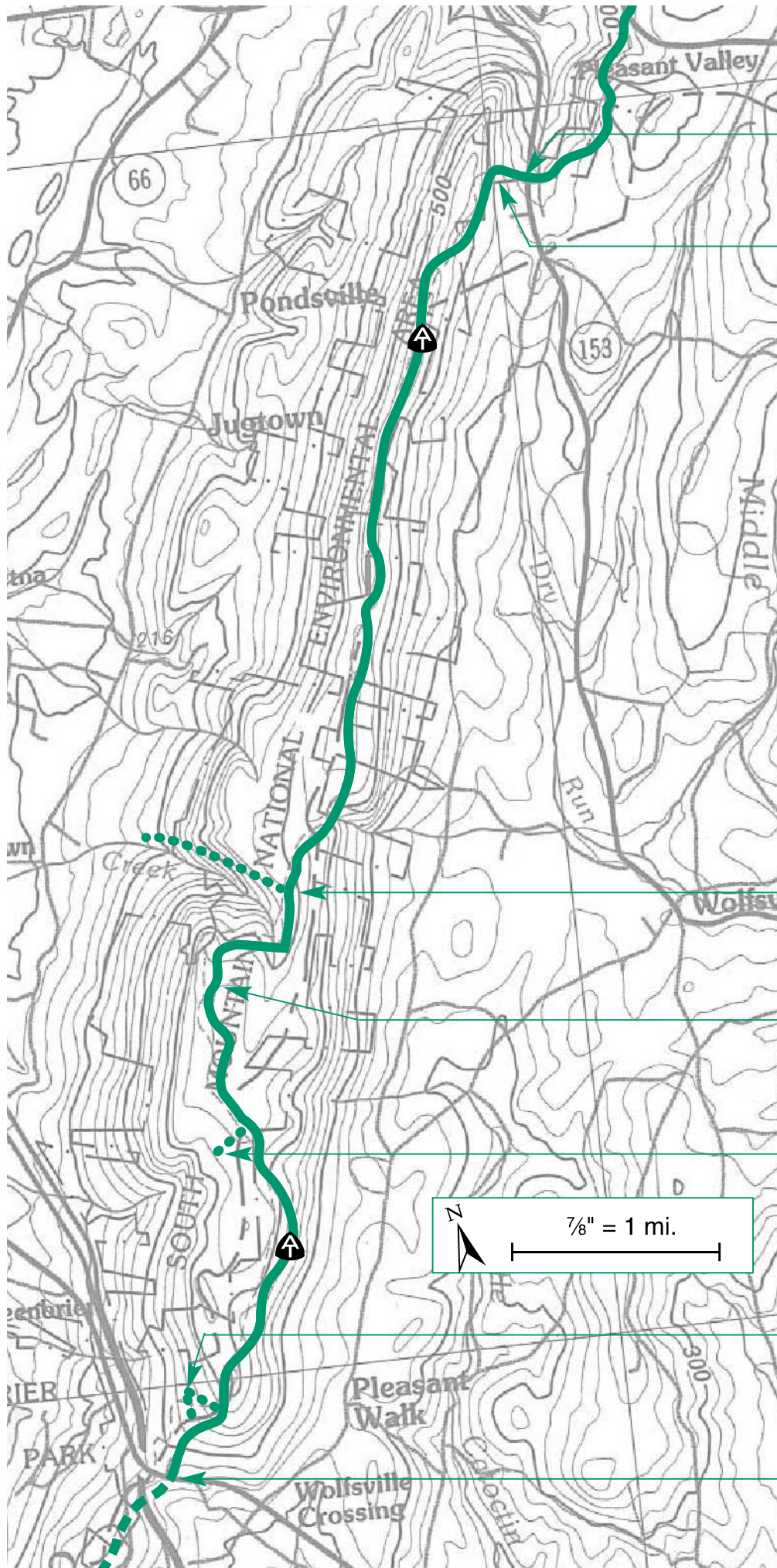
From the campsite, the trail gradually ascends, again following the ridgeline on woods roads and then

Continued on p. 52



passing over very rocky, ankle-twisting terrain (5.4 mi.) on a narrow footpath. The only good view east along this section (6.1 mi.) is reached by a short rock scramble to the right. This limited vista is best seen when the leaves are off the trees.

Just past this overlook, the AT, thankfully, leaves the rocky treadway behind and again intercepts a smooth woods road, which descends



MD 17 (Wolfsville Rd.)
Ⓟ

Hemlock Hill 🏠🌲🏔️
El. 150'

Pogo Memorial
Campsite 🏠🌲🏔️
El. 1600', site of Black
Rock Hotel

Black Rock,
El. 1800', 🌲🍁

Annapolis Rock,
El. 1600', 🌲🍁

Pine Knob 🏠🌲🏔️
El. 1300'

🚶 US 40 Ⓟ El. 1250'

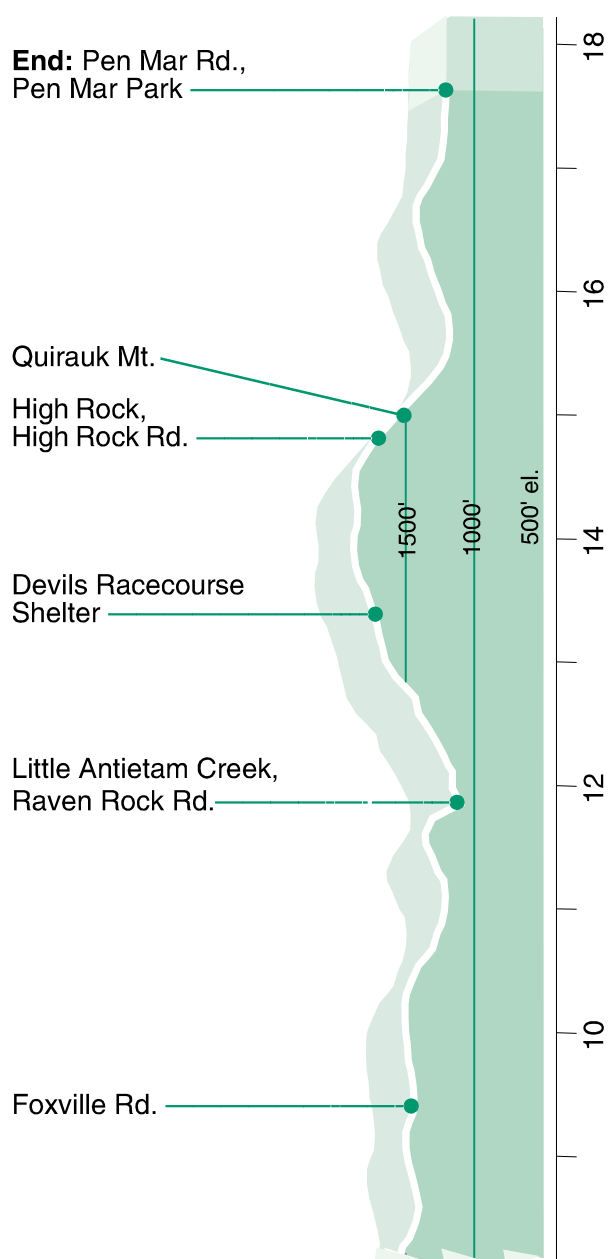
steeply to Hemlock Hill Shelter (8.2 mi.). While this lean-to is only 0.1 mi. south of Wolfsville Rd. (MD 17), it is well kept and unlittered. There is a privy, and a good spring is located 0.3 mi. further up the trail at an abandoned house site.

For those doing this walk as an overnight trip, Hemlock Hill Shelter marks the end of your first day out. For those dividing the walk into two day hikes, Wolfsville Rd. (MD 17) has daytime parking for several cars.

A major relocation is planned for the AT in the area of Wolfsville Rd. and Foxville Rd., one of the few sections of the entire AT still located largely on private property. Planners for the National Park Service and Potomac Appalachian Trail Club volunteers are working to complete the purchase of an AT corridor and to relocate the trail into it by 1999 or 2000. Call the PATC for the status of this project.

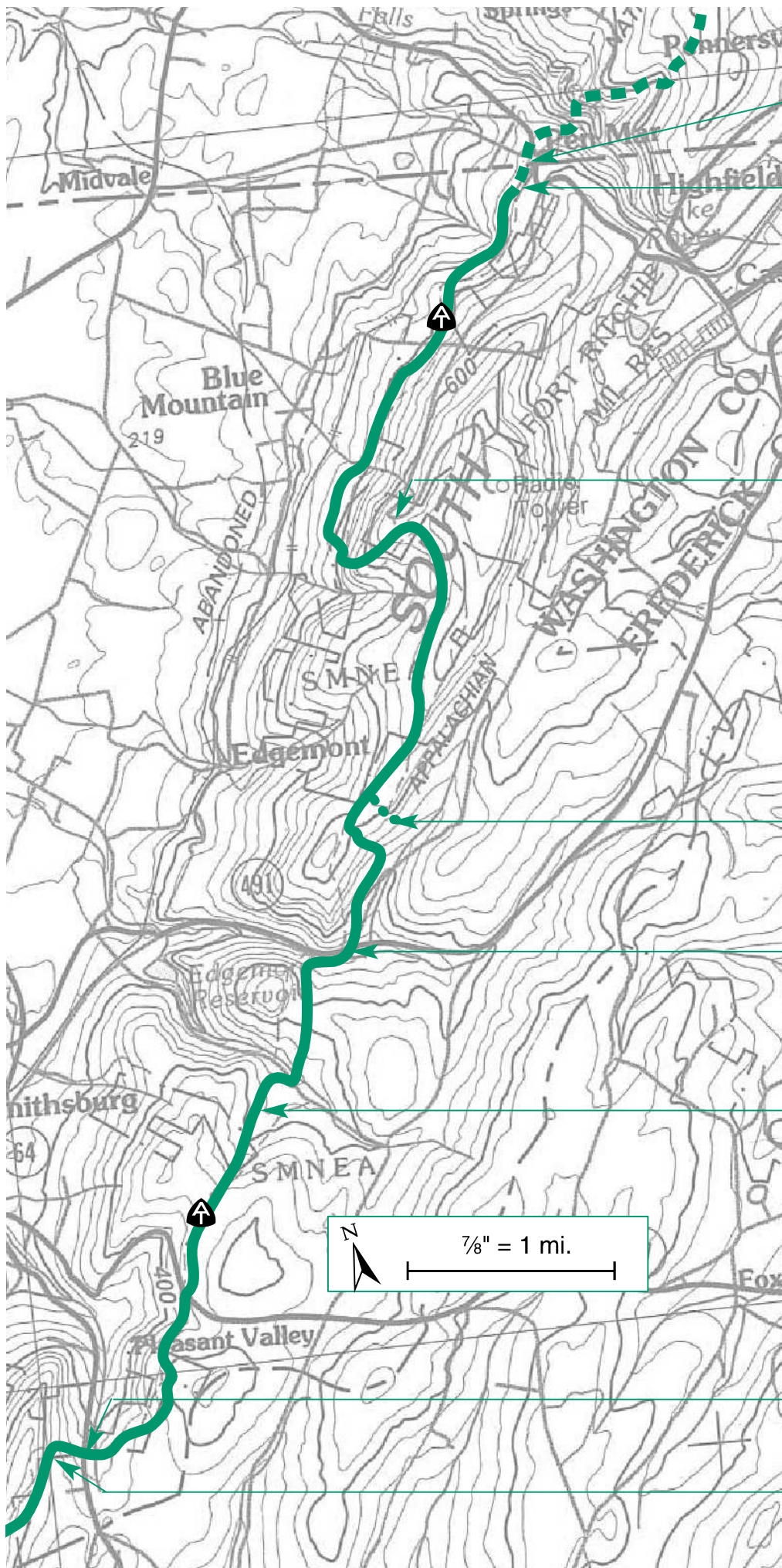
Currently, the trail crosses Wolfsville Rd. (MD 17), briefly follows a gravel road past houses, climbs along the clearing for a power line and natural gas pipeline with good views west, then descends very steeply (9.2 mi.). Luckily, you are walking downhill; this section of the AT falls more steeply than any other section in Maryland.

At 9.4 mi. the trail crosses a polluted tributary of Grove Creek, then passes beneath and circles to the top of a massive overhanging rock face. This site, with its nearby water source, would have made for a very comfortable Native American hunt-




ing camp. Today, the area is occupied by a local rod and gun club.


The AT crosses Foxville Rd. (MD 77) at 9.6 mi., then passes briefly through backyards and past mobile homes and barking dogs. This close brush with civilization may some day be avoided thanks to continuing efforts by government and volunteers to relocate the trail into a forested corridor nearby.




Mason–Dixon line 

Pen Mar County Park    El. 1200' 

High Rock, El. 1700' 

Devils Racecourse  

MD 491 (Raven Rock Rd.) 

Power line, El. 1400' 

MD 17 (Wolfsville Rd.) 

Hemlock Hill    El. 1500'

For the next few miles, the AT ranges up and down over small hills, passing through overgrown farm fields and over stone walls before finally descending Buzzard Knob into Raven Rock Hollow. Watch your step crossing polluted Little Antietam Creek (11.8 mi.). In high water, the lack of a bridge may require the removal of boots for safe fording. The AT climbs up an embankment, crosses MD 491, and continues into the woods.

A long, steady climb takes hikers up onto the back of Quirauk Mt. Once called Mt. Misery, the ridge was given its more euphonious Native American name with the coming of tourists in the late 1800s.

At 12.7 mi. a blue-blazed side trail leads right, descending steeply for 200 vertical ft. over 0.3 mi. to the Devils Racecourse Shelter. Be sure to explore this side trail, even if you aren't planning to stay at the lean-to, which is nestled in a hemlock glen and boasts a privy and a reliable spring.

Continue a few hundred feet downhill past the shelter to reach the Devils Racecourse itself, a riverlike flood of barren boulders that appears to flow along the narrow bottom of this little mountain valley. While glaciers never reached Maryland, the cold weather of the Ice Age did shape the landscape. The heaving action of frost caused the rocks of Devils Racecourse to crack and separate by size, forming the boulder field. A real stream does flow beneath

the rocks, and can be heard at the south end of the racecourse. When rock hopping here in warm weather, watch for the Devil's best buddies, sunbathing snakes.

Return up the blue-blazed trail. The AT then goes right, crossing the relatively flat top of Quirauk Mt. (elev. 1890 ft.) on a woods road. During World War II hikers along this part of the trail might have been startled to see soldiers in full German battle dress approaching them. These were no Nazi paratroopers, but students at America's first school for spies. Nearby Fort Richie was used throughout the war as the Military Intelligence Training Center. The camp included a movie-set-like mock-up of an entire German village, for the practice of raiding techniques, street fighting, and booby trap building. A dark basement labyrinth served as a combat firing range, through which students fought their way with piano wire (for strangling), a knife, a pistol, and one clip of ammunition. They knew they had passed this test if they had three rounds of ammunition left at the end of the exercise with which to shoot effigies of Hitler, Mussolini, and Emperor Hirohito.

The final exam for every cloak-and-dagger class was a 48-hr., 30-mi. bushwhack over the summits of South Mt. At least one group cheated by taking a shortcut along the AT. The Military Intelligence Training Center, or the "Mythical Institute of Total Confusion" as some recruits called it, was closed after V-J Day in 1945.

At 14.4 mi. a blue-blazed side trail goes right for 0.1 mi. to High Rock, once the site of a two-story observation tower. The rock still offers great views west over a checkerboard of farm fields. Unfortunately, unlike Annapolis Rock and Black Rock Cliffs, this vista is reached by a paved road, and can become overcrowded with visitors.

High Rock was once part of Pen Mar County Park, a Gay Nineties amusement center and summertime destination for Washingtonians and citizens of Frederick and other nearby communities (see Hike #4). The blue-blazed trail forms a loop, returning to the AT in another 0.1 mi.

The 440-vertical-ft., 0.5-mi. descent of Quirauk Mt. along the AT would be treacherously steep if not for the fine stone steps and switchbacks installed by volunteers. The trail passes between two giant boulders (15.0 mi.), then levels out. It travels through thick forest and mountain

laurel thickets, following a succession of carriage roads and a railroad bed over the next 2.3 mi. into Pen Mar County Park. Pay close attention to blazing here; it is easy to miss the sudden shifts from one carriage road to the next. There are massive stone ruins and a large depression at 16.5 mi., proof of 19th-century habitation on the mountain.

The AT leaves the forest and enters the grassy fields of Pen Mar County Park at 17.3 mi. There are sweeping views west, and every hiker's favorite trail-end destinations: rest rooms, snack bars, and water fountains. These facilities are open May through October. At 17.6 mi. a sign marks the Mason-Dixon line and the border between Maryland and Pennsylvania, and this hike ends at Pen Mar Rd. (17.7 mi.). There is day parking at the Pen Mar County Park gate 0.4 mi. to the right (east), and overnight parking in the lot within the park, to your right off the AT.



HIKE #3 Itinerary

Miles N		NORTH	Elev. (ft./m)	Miles S
Total: 17.8 mi. with access on side trail of AT				
17.7	End: Pen Mar Rd., follow to R (E) to Pen Mar County Park day parking at gate, overnight parking in lot inside park.		1250/381	0.0
17.6	Mason-Dixon line sign.			0.1
17.3	Pen Mar County Park: former amusement park; views, rest rooms, snack bar, water fountains in summer.			0.4
16.5	Stone ruins.		1250/381	1.2
15.0	AT passes between two giant boulders then levels out.		1200/366	2.7
14.5	Begin steep descent of Quirauk Mt.		1700/518	3.2
14.4	High Rock and High Rock Rd. loop trail goes R (N) for 0.1 mi. to view and rd. then rejoins AT in another 0.1 mi.			3.3
13.7	Highest point on AT in MD.		1890/576	4.0
12.7	Devils Racecourse Shelter side trail descends 200 ft. R (E); reliable spring, privy; (0.3 mi.); Devils Racecourse rocky formation 50 yd. below shelter.		1600/488	5.0
11.9	Begin long, steady ascent of Quirauk Mt.		1200/366	5.8
11.8	Little Antietam Creek; descend to polluted creek; ascend embankment to Raven Rock Rd. (MD 491) and Ritchie Rd. intersection, day parking, early exit option.		1100/335	5.9
9.6	Foxville Rd (MD 77), no parking.		1500/457	8.1
9.4	Grove Creek tributary, polluted; pass beneath overhanging cliff, then circle to its top.		1400/427	8.3
9.2	Steep descent along power line (view), then turn R (N) into woods.			8.5

HIKE #3 Itinerary (continued)

Miles N		Elev. (ft./m)	Miles S
8.9	Reach power line and follow to L (W).	1600/488	8.8
8.5	Side trail leads for 100 yd. R (E) to spring .	1400/427	9.2
8.3	Wolfsville Rd. (MD 17) , day parking and early exit option; AT crosses Wolfsville to nameless gravel road.		9.4
8.2	Hemlock Hill Shelter , privy.	1500/457	9.5
7.6	Begin descending ridge .	1800/549	10.1
6.1	View on L (E).	1800/549	11.6
3.9	Pogo Memorial Campsite , tent sites, privy, spring; Bagtown Rd. (gravel) descends L (W) for 0.9 mi. to parking on White Oak Rd.	1600/488	13.8
3.2	Black Rock unmarked trail leads L (W) for 40 yd. to view.	1800/549	14.5
2.2	Annapolis Rock side trail leads L (W) for 0.2 mi. to view.	1600/488	15.5
0.9	Pine Knob , South Mt. summit; no view.	1714/522	16.8
0.5	Pine Knob Shelter side trail leads L (W) in 0.1 mi. to shelter, privy, and spring; AT continues climbing.	1350/412	17.2
0.1	US 40 underpass , begin slow climb.		17.6
0.0	Start AT miles: I-70 AT footbridge, N end , at intersection of I-70 and US 40, 10.0 mi. SE of Hagerstown.	1250/381	17.7
0.1	Access: Side trail leads to overnight AT parking (0.1 mi.) on US 40.		0.1

SOUTH

Geographic Organization












The hikes included in this volume follow the Appalachian Trail from south to north. Most of the hikes are described as south-to-north walks, but many are suitable to walking the opposite way, too. A few hikes are best done from north to south. We have avoided some wicked climbs by bringing you down, rather than up, certain nasty hills.

Maps: Legends, Skills, Sources

Abbreviations

Abbreviations commonly used:
AHS, American Hiking Society
AMC, Appalachian Mountain Club
ATC, Appalachian Trail Conference
CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps

USFS, U.S. Forest Service
USGS, U.S. Geological Survey



Start or End of hike

Trailhead parking

Viewpoint

Camping

Lean-to (a.k.a. Shelter)
(anything three-sided)

Cabin, Lodge, Hut (anything enclosed)


Water (spring or other source)

Toilet (outhouse, privy, or better)


EI. Elevation

Natural History Site


Historic / Cultural Site




Appalachian Trail



Appalachian Trail—before Start and after End of hike



Appalachian Trail—planned relocation



Access Trail (to/from AT) or side (spur) trail

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



GLENN SCHERER is a NY-NJTC volunteer who moves rocks and mountains of paperwork to support the AT. Scherer has hiked the AT in Maryland, New Jersey, and New York, plus Vermont's Long Trail and Maine's 100-Mile Wilderness. His writing has appeared in *Backpacker*, *Outside*, *AMC Outdoors*, *Appalachian Trailway News*, *American Hiker*, and *New Jersey Country Roads*. In 1995 he wrote *Vistas and Vision: A History of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference*. His *Nature Walks in New Jersey* is forthcoming from AMC. Glenn Scherer lives in Highland Lakes, New Jersey.

DON HOPEY is the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* environmental reporter. He has hiked 700 miles of the AT in Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, Georgia, and Maine. Hopey contributed to *Appalachian Adventure*, about a 1995 AT relay hike by reporters from five newspapers. He has also hiked in the Grand Canyon (Yellowstone River), Black Canyon (Gunnison River), Never Summer Mountains (Colorado), Great Smoky Mts. (Tennessee), and on Mt. Rainier (Washington), all with a fly rod poking from his backpack.

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Readers are advised that trail conditions and locations change frequently due to both natural factors (e.g., erosion) and legal factors (e.g., National Park Service real estate acquisitions). Information in this volume was as accurate as the authors could make it at the time of printing. However, readers should check with their local Appalachian Trail hiking clubs (see "Useful Information") for updated information. Readers are also advised that hiking involves some risk of accident and exposure to potentially harmful weather, animals, or impure water. Precautions are advised here under "Hiking: The Basics," and the reader uses this guide at his or her own risk. The publisher assumes no liability.

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