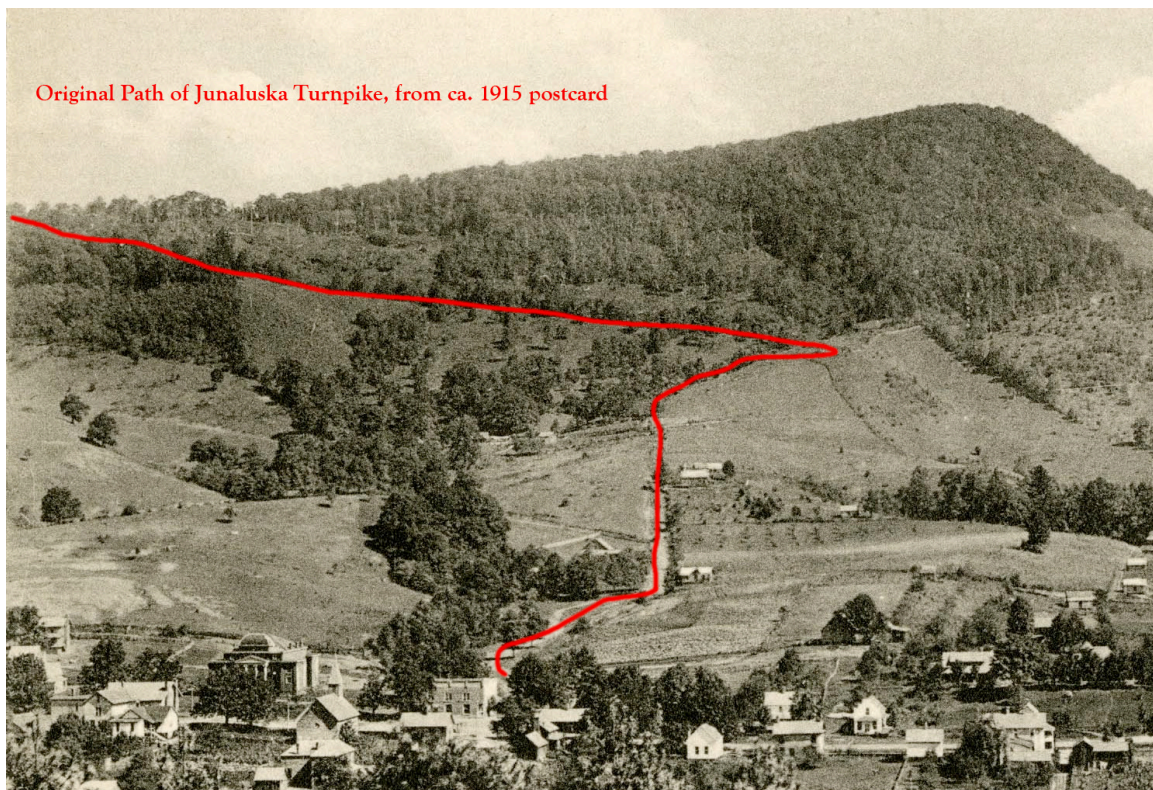


Junaluska Road

Junaluska Road is named for a turnpike project initiated by Romulus Zachariah Linney (1841-1910) and the Junaluska Turnpike Company in 1905, with the road intended to stretch from Boone to the state line at Zionville.¹ Linney was the owner of much of Tater Hill and had a home in the Silverstone vicinity. The new road facilitated more direct access to Boone from that home, and several articles from the earliest days of the turnpike refer to Linney traveling the new road in his “buggy,” probably a horse-drawn vehicle rather than an automobile. Local tradition holds that Linney named the Junaluska Turnpike for a Cherokee leader of that name (Cherokee: *Tsunu’lahun’ski*, c. 1779-1858), who in the Treaty of 1819 had claimed about 640 acres of land at Deep Gap.²



The earliest form of the turnpike began at a point near the present-day intersection of Junaluska Road and North Street, following the modern road course for a short distance to the bend in the present road near present-day Summit Street. Here, the turnpike continued straight up the mountain, utilizing old road traces, rather than zigzagging up the first half of Rich Mountain as it presently does. Portions of the original road trace can be seen behind 218 and 224 Junaluska Road, along Wyn Way,

¹ “Notice,” *Watauga Democrat*, 2 February 1905: 2.

² Gordon B. McKinney, “Junaluska,” *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, William S. Powell, ed., Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1979-1996, reprinted at <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/junaluska>. On the naming by Linney, see Rob Rivers, “Trip to Tater Hill with Clyde Eggers Recalls Days of Colonel R. Z. Linney,” *Watauga Democrat*, 17 October 1963: B7.

and on some parcels of land just above the second switchback in Junaluska Road. This pathway is quite evident in a circa 1915 postcard showing the Junaluska hillside, above.

Funding for the road was by subscription, although there are some indications that state revenue also aided in its construction, no doubt because of R. Z. Linney's considerable political connections.³ Construction of the portion from the Rich Mountain Gap to Silverstone Gap began in earnest in July 1905, with work overseen by Romulus's son, Frank A. Linney.⁴ Romulus, who was president of the Junaluska Turnpike Company, completed the first trip over the road in his buggy on September 16, 1905.⁵

The Junaluska Turnpike Company also secured a right of way for the road from nine different landowners in September 1905 (DB 10, Page 153), but other deed research has demonstrated that this right of way did not include all of the landowners whose property the road traversed at that time and was probably limited to land on the north side of Rich Mountain. This may have been because the first portion of the road out of Boone followed what were likely established cart paths leading up past the farms that already dotted the Junaluska hillside. For example, the 1894 deed for the Methodist Episcopal Church (Colored) of Boone, NC—visible at the right side of the turnpike about halfway up the mountain in the above image—makes clear reference to the church being positioned “on the road leading up the Rich Mountain to Howard's Knob” (DB R, Page 474), a full nine years prior to construction of the turnpike.

Following the 1916 Flood, the Junaluska Turnpike was nearly impassable, even to carts. In 1926, local realtor H. W. Horton reworked the turnpike route, removed the boulders that had clogged portions of the original path, and widened the grade, thus opening the course to automobiles for the first time in its history.⁶ This reworked route followed the present path of Junaluska Road (including the remaining gravel portion between Wyn Way and Eastview) to the present-day intersection with Eastview Drive, then crossed Eastview into the “East Junaluska Road” area and zigzagged up the hill. Once Junaluska Road was realigned, locals referred to the old, abandoned sections of the turnpike path as “the Mountain Road” and the new path as “Junaluska Road.”⁷ Construction of Eastview Drive by Jack Norris as part of a Howard's Knob development scheme in 1963 bypassed the East Junaluska portions, which remain unpaved and mostly inaccessible to the present day.⁸

³ Rivers, “Trip to Tater Hill”; “Howards Knob Road Repaired,” *Watauga Democrat*, 20 May 1926: 1.

⁴ *Watauga Democrat*, 6 July 1905: 3.

⁵ *Watauga Democrat*, 25 May 1905: 3; and 21 September 1905: 3.

⁶ “Howards Knob Road Repaired,” 1.

⁷ This remained a practice into the early 1960s. See “Watauga School Has New Building,” *Watauga Democrat*, 4 August 1960: 1.

⁸ Jean L. Rivers, “Dear Jane and Rachel,” *Watauga Democrat*, 2 May 1963: 1.

Junaluska Road is one of the most historic and more beautiful but rugged roads in Watauga County. It makes for a delightful drive that eventually terminates at the rural intersection with Tater Hill Road and Howards Creek Road (SR1306). Much of the portion outside of Boone town limits and off the Rich Mountain ridge remains unpaved. Tater Hill Road from the above junction to Silverstone Road roughly follows the original last portion of the turnpike route and is particularly steep and treacherous. Allow one hour for the full trip, including the return to Boone from the route's terminus at Silverstone.

--Eric Plaag

Brief Blurb for Use on Website: Junaluska Road had its origins on the south side of Rich Mountain and Howard's Knob as a series of cart paths that had been used since at least the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1905, though, Romulus Zachariah Linney chartered the Junaluska Turnpike Company in order to create a direct route of travel between Boone and his home near Silverstone. An early form of the turnpike went straight up the hillside along the old cart paths, but damage from flooding events prompted H. W. Horton to rework the Junaluska Road path in 1926 to something resembling its present configuration below its intersection with Eastview Drive. Development of the Howard's Knob area in 1963 by Jack Norris created the present path between Eastview Drive and the crest of the Howard's Knob saddle. The portion from there to Silverstone largely follows Linney's original turnpike route.