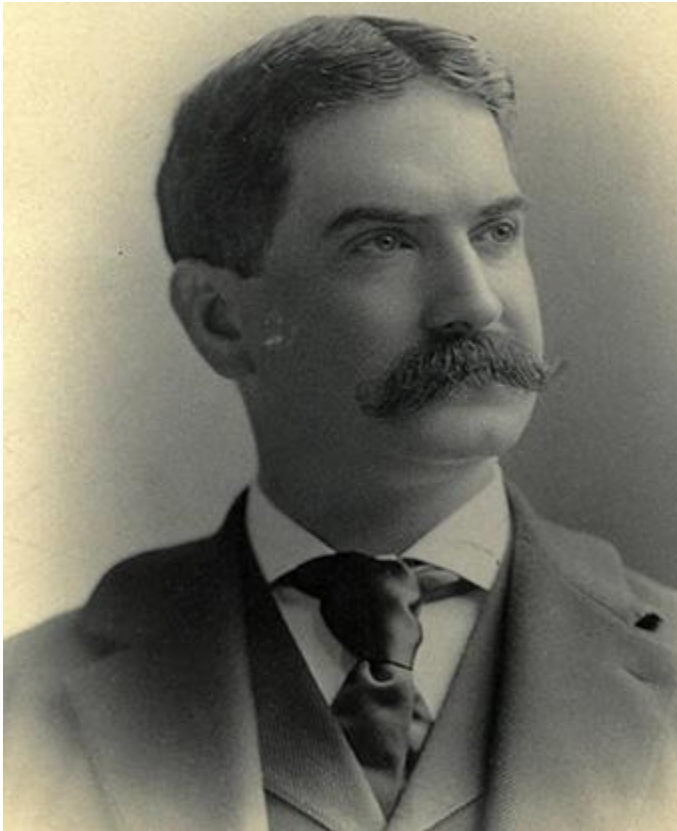


Backstory: The Cone Estate and Family

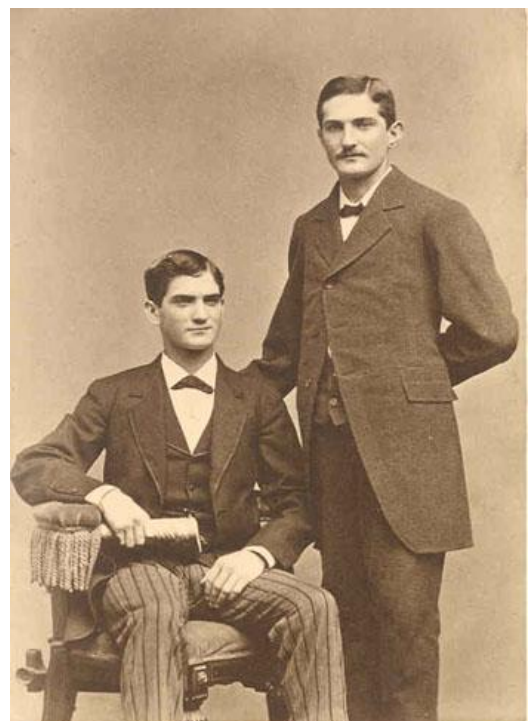


If you've traveled the Blue Ridge Parkway outside of Blowing Rock proper you may have come across milepost 294, home to the beautiful Moses H. Cone Memorial Park. Now owned and operated by the National Park Service (with the estate listed on the National Register of Historic Places) the estate was established by Moses H. Cone, the "denim king," and his wife, Bertha Cone in 1899.

Moses' father, Herman Kahn, immigrated to America in 1846 at the age of 17 from Bavaria, Germany. Herman settled in Richmond, Virginia and eventually changed his name from "Kahn" to "Cone" to aid in his assimilation into American culture. After a few years in Virginia, Herman moved to Jonesboro, Tennessee and

opened up a grocery store. He later married Helen Guggenheimer, also of German-Jewish heritage, and the two would go on to have a total of 13 children. Moses H. Cone, the oldest of Herman and Helen's brood, was born on June 29, 1857 in Jonesboro. In 1870 the Cone family moved to Baltimore seeking better opportunities in the post-Civil War era. Herman opened a wholesale grocery in Baltimore and employed several of his children, of particular note, Moses and his brother Caesar. Caesar and Moses worked as traveling salesmen for their father eventually going on to become partners in the family business, H. Cone and Sons. (Above image: Moses H. Cone. Right image: Moses (sitting) and brother, Caesar Cone).

Throughout their time as traveling salesmen the two Cone brothers made extensive connections with those in the textile industry and in 1891 the



two decided to start their own business, Cone Export & Commission Company. This company sold various textile products from independent workers and smaller textile mills to larger markets. In 1895, Moses and Caesar decided to expand their company by opening the Proximity Manufacturing Company in Greensboro, North Carolina. This cotton mill produced denim and would prove to be extremely lucrative for the two Cones' brothers. Over the years their business continued to grow and flourish leading them to purchase multiple textile mills and eventually becoming the leading force in denim, corduroy, and flannel production. Moses' nickname the "denim king" comes from the fact that the brothers were producing one third of the world's denim fabric. (Left image: Bertha Lindau Cone painting via ConeHealth.com. Below image: Flat Top Manor circa 1980s).



Moses married Bertha Lindau on February 15, 1888. Having visited Blowing Rock as a young man during his traveling salesman days, Moses Cone knew he wanted to eventually settle down in this idyllic part of the High Country. Between 1893 and 1899 he and Bertha acquired the majority of the land that would make up the Cone Estate. The estate totaled 3,516 acres and was comprised of 500 acres of rolling farmland, forests of virgin hardwood and evergreen trees, Flat Top Mountain, and Rich Mountain. After the purchase of the Jefferson Brown Farm, Moses and Bertha began construction on the manor home, Flat Top Manor. Flat Top Manor was built in Colonial Revival style and designed as the Cones' summer home where they could relax and soak up the beautiful mountain vistas (their winters were spent in Baltimore, Maryland). The manor consisted of nearly 14,000 square feet, three floors, and had 23 rooms which included: 11 bedrooms, a billiard room, a library, a music room, 11 fireplaces, and seven bathrooms. Flat Top had indoor plumbing with cold and hot running water, telephones, a servants call system, a carbide gas lighting

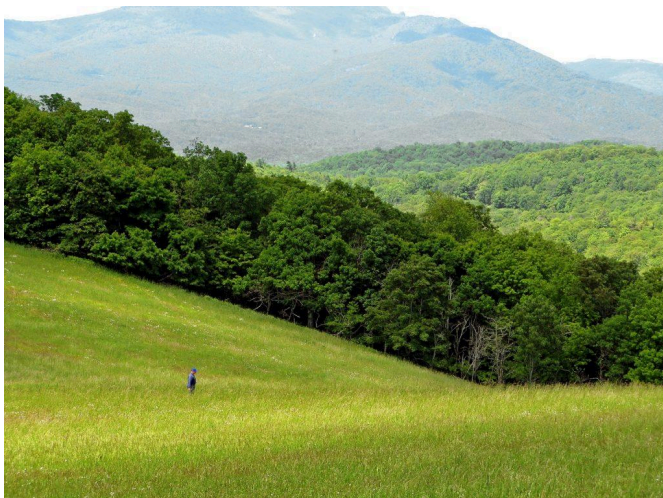




system, and a central wood-fired heating system. The Cones cared deeply about the natural beauty of Blowing Rock and worked tirelessly to ensure that their estate contributed to it. Under their guidance, three lakes were installed on their estate, stocked with bass and/or trout. Moses Cone also designed 25 miles of scenic roads for visitors to enjoy either by foot or by carriage. Beyond just his own estate, Moses Cone was very active in pushing for an Appalachian Forest Reserve in order to curb

excessive logging in the area. (Above image: A view on the Cone Estate. Image via BlueRidgeParkway.org. Below image right: Flat Top Manor. Image via the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area. Below image left: A view of the rolling hills found at Moses H. Cone Memorial Park. Image via BlueRidgeParkway.org).

Bertha and Moses were ardent environmentalists, caring deeply for the land they now called home. The Cones not only cared for the land but also the people of Blowing Rock. Evidence of the Cones' generosity to their employees can be seen clearly in Bertha's establishment of a school dedicated to the children of estate workers. The Sandy Flat School provided a necessary resource for children of the Cone's workforce. The Cones often held events on property where they treated all of the children in the community and children of estate employees to free apples and ice cream.



Another important element of the Cone Estate was its vast apple orchards. The orchards consisted of 300 acres with some 10,000 apple trees with twenty different apple tree varieties present. The apple orchards provided seasonal employment for a good number of Blowing Rock citizens, at times employing as much as 20% of the

town's population. Although Moses did not live to see the orchards become profitable, the orchards' apples were eventually sold all over the Southeast under the expert guidance of Bertha Cone. It is this philanthropy and environmental dedication that has cemented the Cones as icons of Blowing Rock history, and their estate-turned-national-park exemplifies this fact with its beauty. (Right image: A view from the porch on Flat Top Manor. Image via NPS.gov. Below image left: A carriage ride on the Cone Estate circa 1950s. Below image right: Moses and Bertha Cone. Image via the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation).



Moses and Bertha hosted a wide variety of influential guests at their estate including: the Governor of North Carolina, the president of the Southern Railroad Company, and Josephus Daniels, the Secretary of the Navy under President Woodrow Wilson.

In 1906, Bertha and Moses traveled around the world for a year (beginning in Europe and ending in Asia). While on said trip Moses was diagnosed with heart problems after falling ill. He passed suddenly on December 8, 1908 due to heart complications at the age of 51.

Bertha Cone would go on to live for another 39 years, taking up full management of the estate. Flat Top Manor would remain Bertha's summer home for the rest of her life. On June 8, 1947, Bertha Lindau Cone passed away at the age of 89. Upon her death, Bertha Cone conveyed 3,516 acres of the estate to the Cone Memorial Hospital in Greensboro, NC. The park was to



be maintained as a recreational facility for the public. The hospital eventually transferred their ownership to the federal government and the land became part of the National Park System on January 21, 1949. Today, the estate and manor make up the Moses H. Cone Memorial Park and still fall under the care of the National Park Service. Stop by



milepost 294 of the Blue Ridge Parkway to see this remarkable patch of land for yourself. Enjoy hiking, biking, and horseback riding on the historic carriage roads while taking in the beautiful rolling hills that the Cones' worked ardently to preserve for generations to come. (Left image: A beautiful fall day at Moses H. Cone Memorial Park. Image via BlueRidgeParkway.org).