

The History of Virginia's Explore Park
During the Time When Rupert Cutler was Executive Director
1990-1996

The document contains all the newspaper articles about Explore Park during the 1990-1996 timeframe that could be retrieved using Ancestry's newspaper archive search service.

<https://www.newspapers.com/search/results/?date-end=2010&date-start=1999&keyword=%22Rupert+Cutler%22&Ind=1>

Documentation

A chronological listing of articles on Explore Park published in The Roanoke Times

October 17, 1990, Page 1

Director named for Explore environmental center

Rupert Cutler, a former Audubon Society senior vice president who ran the nation's forestry program in the Carter Administration, was introduced at a news conference.

October 18, 1990

Leading environmentalist to head Explore center

The River Foundation, is a bold move to get Explore off the drawing board, announced Wednesday that it had hired a nationally known environmentalist to run the proposed environmental center that would be the centerpiece of the project's first phase.

March 2, 1991

Explore, zoo unveil plans to join forces

March 7, 1991

Red wolves coming to Explore Park

For Explore, the red wolf represents a chance to get some meaningful programs under way before the park itself is built, as well as to validate its environmental credentials with potential donors, Ewert says.

March 10, 1991

Walk in the woods

As early as this summer, Ewert says, Explore could start some high-profile breeding programs with endangered species. Within three months, Ewert and new environmental director Rupert Cutler also plan to announce a list of a half-dozen other environmental programs Explore will start work on right away.

March 31, 1991

Construction of National Conservation Training Center in Harpers Ferry Announced

Ed Clark, Wildlife Center of Virginia: "If Explore is trying to raise money to create a regional North American wildlife facility, they're going to have a hell of a time to justify a \$15 million first phase when they're competing with \$60 million [for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service project in Harpers Ferry]. To put something like this federal facility at Harpers Ferry is really going to pre-empt a lot of the draw Explore is going to collect."

April 11, 1991

Explore sees need for 'natural area'

The Explore Park's governing body may decide to legally designate much of the 1,200-acre site as "natural areas" not to be developed.... Rupert Cutler...recently suggested that the plan be formalized with some legal designation.

April 19, 1991

The tipoff by Joe Kennedy

Roanoke's Earth Day 1991 celebration will be Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. at Wasena Park. Former U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson, who co-founded the first Earth Day observance, will speak at 1:30 p.m. Rupert Cutler, director of the Lewis and Clark Environmental Education Center at Explore, also will speak.

April 22, 1991

Founder call for environmental education

Former Sen. [Gaylord] Nelson told an enthusiastic crowd that three things must happen in order for industrial nations to switch from being environmental consumers to environmental conservationists.

May 5, 1991

Explore strikes a deal

Park will sponsor federal seminars

The Explore Park has forged a formal agreement with the federal government to sponsor environmental conferences for the U.S. Forest Service. Explore planners Saturday heralded the deal as a breakthrough in the quest for national recognition.

May 10, 1991

Editorial: Explore Park on the move

Spring has brought something resembling a flurry of activity at Explore. It's a welcome reminder that the project is still here, on track, and making progress.

June 6, 1991

Explore will not retain Ewert as project director

The River Foundation confirmed Wednesday that it will not renew [Bern] Ewert's contract as project director when it expires July 31.

June 7, 1991

Editorial: Ewert and Explore part ways

...Explore has raised only \$1 million in private money for construction. The amount raised thus far is tiny.... Without Ewert, there would be no Explore. He deserves the community's gratitude....

June 17, 1991

Explore determined to escape from Ewert's shadow

In the wake of the River Foundation's extraordinary ouster of Ewert as project director this month, the board now looks to environmental director Rupert Cutler to raise the millions necessary to build the proposed \$18.5 million living-history state park.

July 10, 1991

Explore, Mill Mountain Zoo make agreement official

The Explore Park and Mill Mountain Zoo signed a contract Tuesday that may go a long way toward ensuring the survival of some endangered species—the red wolf, the Florida panther and perhaps the zoo itself.

July 31, 1991

Under, over and back on the road

Peregrine falcons in downtown Roanoke, a possibility once dismissed, is again heating on the front burner. Rupert Cutler is intrigued by the idea, as is Beth Poff of the Mill Mountain Zoo. Cutler says he's contacted state game experts about the possibility of releasing falcons in Roanoke, where they would prey on, but not eliminate, ledge-roosting pigeons.

September 1-2, 1991

Two-part recap by Dwayne Yancey of Bern's Ewert's impact on Roanoke

"He was typically so full of enthusiasm for his project," says Rupert Cutler, who headed fund-raising campaigns for a number of major environmental groups before joining Explore as environmental director, "that he would move into a prospect with a zealous salesmanship that didn't permit the person being courted much of a chance to explain their needs, their limits, their interests. Ultimately, the potential funder felt their priorities weren't being listened to."

September 6, 1991

Hofauger farmstead to be re-built at Explore Park

"Major changes could be made to [the park's] design. If we can get a consensus, we're more apt to get more local financial support and state financial support, he says. It's all part of his plan to get more local groups involved in the planning and operation of Explore, which in the past has been tinged by the impression that the park is the pet project of a handful of prominent Roanoke business leaders.

September 26, 1991

Explore changes name

The Explore Park has a new name: Virginia's Explore Park. Environmental Director Rupert Cutler said he got the idea after visiting what is now billed as Georgia's Stone Mountain. The state board that governs the park agreed Wednesday to adopt the new name.

October 9, 1991

1,000 acres of Explore left wild

The Explore Park board voted to set aside 1,004 acres—about two-thirds of the park—in "natural area" never to be developed. It sent a signal, environmental director Rupert Cutler hopes. "I wanted the community to know that environmental protection is a very high priority objective of the Explore Park program and this action today should send that message," Cutler said.

October 22, 1991

Explore officials give assurances; Roanoke council fears competition

The Explore Park won't compete for business with a renovated Hotel Roanoke and conference center, Roanoke City Council was assured by park officials. "We all agree that we need to reopen Hotel Roanoke," [Rupert] Cutler said. The idea of a major hotel at Explore in eastern Roanoke County is just a blue-sky dream at this point, he said.

November 3, 1991

Environmentalists picnic at Explore

There was Roanoke birder Fred Cramer picnicking Saturday at Virginia's Explore Park and talking up the fact that he's holding Roanoke's annual Christmas bird count there this year. Explore's environmental director, Rupert Cutler, stood in his hiking boots on a stack of bricks and apologized for an environmental no-no nearby—Explore's draining a wetland.

November 20, 1991

Explore Park receives first big-name donations

Rupert Cutler was working late at the office Monday, proudly typing out his own news prelease about the Explore Park's first national contribution--\$5,000 from the Ford Motor Co.—when the phone rang. It was the Chevron Corp. in California. Another \$5,000 contribution was on the way. With \$10,000 in hand, Explore and Kill Mountain Zoo now can start their endangered-species breeding program.

November 22, 1991

Explore breaks new ground

Center to sponsor 1st conference

The Explore Park, which hopes to make Roanoke an international center for environmental meetings, has landed its first conference. More than 100 forestry experts from throughout North America will meet Dec. 2-5 at a conference co-sponsored by Explore and the U.S. Forest Service to discuss new ways of managing the nation's forests.

November 28, 1991

Explore simplifies scheme

No Phase One plans cost \$6 million less

Explore planners have once again scaled back the size of the proposed living-history state park's first phase, this time from \$16 million to \$10 million. Instead of building a re-created Blue Ridge frontier town, the plan now calls for the development of eight small-scale "activity areas" that would teach visitors about life on the frontier. Cutler says the project should evolve slowly over time. That reflects more realistic fund raising goals for a start-up project such as Explore.

November 29, 1991

No longer 'proposed'

The result is a program that has delighted Roanoke Valley educators looking for field trips that can give students a hands-on feel for Virginia's frontier history. "It's no longer the *proposed* Explore Park, Cutler proclaims. "It's the actual, being-used-by-the-public-now Virginia's Explore Park."

December 5, 1991

Explore defends its red wolves

Wednesday should have been a gratifying day for Explore Park director Rupert Cutler. A group of Native Americans had arrived to build a communal Indian "sweat lodge" that Cutler hopes will help draw droves of paying customers to the park for years to come. Instead, Cutler found himself running damage control on Explore's recently announced plan to breed rare red wolves at the park for eventual release into the wild.

December 8, 1991

Explore to get Roanoke support

After months of delay, Roanoke City Council is expected to agree this week to allow the proposed Roanoke River Parkway to cross the Roanoke Valley regional landfill property. This would remove the last legal impediment to the construction of the \$15 million access road from the Blue Ridge Parkway to the Explore living-history state park.

December 22, 1991

Firs & Forestry by Alan Sorensen

This year's tree-farm trip seen from 'New Perspective'

The U.S. Forest Service had held a national workshop in Roanoke. Rupert Cutler, director of Explore Park's environmental education center, had left me little choice but to drop by. The first thing that struck me was that Roanoke was hosting the affair. Thanks to Cutler's contacts, the Forest Service had arranged to hold this conference Dec. 3-5, in Roanoke. It was the second gathering of foresters and others to discuss something called "New Perspectives" in managing national-forest lands. The profiles of both Explore and the Roanoke area were raised a little thereby. I gather that "New Perspectives" reflects anxiety and change afoot in forest management.

January 15, 1992

Falcons to roost on Dominion Tower

Downton Roanoke Inc. will contribute \$8,000 to the project. Mitchell Byrd, a biology professor at the College of William and Mary, has committed \$15,000 of a peregrine fund he administers. Rupert Cutler hailed the cooperative venture as "the return of nature to the city."

February 17, 1992

The Question Box

Do you think Explore Park will have any benefits for the city?

Bowers: "I think [environmental director] Rupert Cutler is trying to get Explore redirected in the way it should be. I think [of] Explore as a park, an environmental study area. I think that under the direction of Rupert Cutler—who I've become impressed by in the several times I've met with him—I think he's going to redirect Explore."

May 17, 1992

An environmental champion gets back in the ring

In a career spanning four decades with a who's who of national groups, Rupert Cutler helped reshape America's environmental policies. Now he faces another challenge, one that he didn't expect when he "retired" to Roanoke last year: reshaping the Explore Park. The man who left Washington to get away from the political wars found himself in the middle of one.

May 17, 1992

Project will explore Cutler's connections in fund-raising area

Explore's backers say they're more optimistic than ever about raising the private money necessary to build the park. The reason? Rupert Cutler and his contacts with potential contributors nationwide. Shenandoah Life Chairman Joe Stephenson, who heads the River Foundation, talks up Cutler as the project's savior.

June 5, 1992

Clouds don't give park a break

In a waterlogged clearing in the woods east of Roanoke, Explore planners held a barbecue to mark the reassembly of the 1830s farmhouse that will serve as the park's focal point for

teaching visitors about what life on the Appalachian frontier was like. This no scrawny log cabin, but a real house—two stories in all. The reassembly cost \$240,000 in private funds.

June 14, 1992
The Falcon File

Peregrine falcons, once on the brink of extinction, are being re-introduced to the Roanoke Valley. Five peregrine chicks arrived Saturday. They'll be raised in a special "hack box" atop the former Colonial American Bank building at Campbell and Jefferson in downtown Roanoke. Explore Park director took an interest and campaigned to bring peregrines to Roanoke. Downtown Roanoke spearheaded an \$8,000 fundraising drive.

July 15, 1992
Associated Press (Daily Press, Newport News and other papers)
Park board agrees to pay for expenses
Money to come from land fund

Explore Park received financial breathing room Tuesday when its board agreed to pay operating expenses for educational programming by tapping state funds originally allocated for buying land. "Our backs are to the wall as far as funding," director Rupert Cutler said. The board received \$6 million from the General Assembly in 1988 to buy land. Project Engineer Richard Burfron said that's all the land [1,300 acres] the park needs for awhile.

July 16, 1992
Richmond Times-Dispatch
New center to breed wildlife

Virginia's Explore Project and Mill Mountain Zo have joined forces to develop a center for the captive breeding of endangered North American wildlife.

July 24, 1992
Explore hires top teacher

The Explore Park has hired Franklin County's Teacher of the Year to run its education program. Virginia Webb, a Franklin County science teacher, will be in charge of coordinating school pupil visits. I'm sure we'll be able to keep the program going," Cutler said. "We're right on track." "I think there's a whole new enthusiasm about the project now that Rupert Cutler is on board," said Apco President Joseph Vipperman.

July 26, 1992
The Basics
First Phase of Explore opens

Virginia's Explore Park is finally open—sort of. After seven years of political fireworks and changing plans, the 1,600 [sic] acre living-history state park just outside Roanoke has something to show the public for its efforts.

August 1, 1992
Associated Press (Richmond Times-Dispatch and others)
Roanoke landfill to be turned into park
Project to feature visitor center, wildlife habitat

On a miserably hot summer afternoon, Explore Park director Rupert Cutler seemed oblivious to the garbage trucks rumbling by piles of sun-ripened trash at the Roanoke Regional Landfill. Cutler was enraptured by his own vision of the 300-acre site beside the Roanoke River. "We can turn this site to ecological productivity." Cutler said a prairie at the landfill site could be periodically "mowed" by the buffalo and elk. Robert Atkinson, an ecologist at Virginia Tech's Center for Environmental Studies, said he came away from the landfill tour impressed with the concept.

August 6, 1992

Explore director: Park, hotel can help each other

A renovated Hotel Roanoke and Explore Park, once considered potential competitors for tourist dollars in the Roanoke Valley, can be a financial boon for each other, Explore's executive director said Wednesday. Rupert Cutler said Explore will be a destination attraction that could help Hotel Roanoke salespeople persuade groups to hold conferences in Roanoke. Cutler also revived the possibility of a transportation link between the hotel and Explore. [Mayor David] Bowers said he welcomed Cutler's proposal.

August 7, 1992

The Franklin News-Post

Park road proposed

An environmental statement recommending a 1.5-mile alternative route for the Blue Ridge Parkway spur into Explore Park has been released by the National Park Service. The new plan does not call for the road to enter Bedford County.

February 7, 1993

The News and Advance Lynchburg

Red wolves' first date unsuccessful; Endangered species part of a genetic 'Dating Game'

Explore's environmental director, Rupert Cutler, and Mill Mountain Zoo Director Beth Poff are not discouraged.

April 12, 1993

Who will pay for Explore?

The Explore Park, struggling to build even a modest version of the once-ambitious frontier history park, now faces a cash crunch from its founders. The River Foundation wants someone else to pick up Explore's \$450,000-a-year operating expenses. That someone is the taxpayers. First in Roanoke County and later across the state.

April 12, 1993

Foresters volunteer to build hiking trails

Some modern-day trailblazing is taking place at the Explore Park. Some foresters from the Blue Ridge Chapter of the Society of American Foresters have volunteered to build a network of hiking trail at the park.

April 15, 1993

Associated Press (Daily Press Newport News and others)

Living-history park seeks support

Norfolk businessman leads committee to study options

The governing body of Explore Park is looking outside the Roanoke Valley and perhaps to the state to find a way to pay its operating expenses. Heading the committee is Clifford Cutchins of Norfolk, the retired chairman of what used to be Sovran Bank. Joining him will be Northern Virginia businessman Carey Crane and former Roanoke College President Norman Fintel. "It's experience and contacts," said Explore's environment director Rupert Cutler.

April 15, 1993
The Daily Progress Charlottesville
Living-history park seeking funding

The governing body of Explore Park is trying to find money to run the park after the park's founders quit paying operating expenses next year.

April 30, 1993
Explore gets key construction funding

The \$250,000 contribution from the Richmond-based Beirne Carter Foundation will pay for reassembling an early 19th century barn that will serve as the temporary education center and exhibit hall for the living-history state park.

April 29, 1993
Associated Press (The Free Lance-Star Fredericksburg and others)
Roanoke County supports Explore

Roanoke County has approved a \$350,000 request that Explore Park officials say is needed to open a modest version of the living history park next year. "Now I can fund-raise. This makes all the difference in the world," Rupert Cutler, head of the park, said Tuesday after county supervisors approved setting aside the fund to widen a road.

May 20, 1993
Wilder: Explore not state problem, won't get money

Governor Douglas Wilder has adamantly ruled out state funding for the Explore Park in his final budget, blasting Explore's inability to raise large private contributions and insisting that the state isn't responsible for the project's fate.

May 20, 1993
Associated Press (Martinsville Bulletin and others)
Wilder rules out rescuing Explore

June 15, 1993
Associated Press (The News and Advance Lynchburg and others)
Scaled-down frontier park opens

Virginia's newest frontier park, which is designed to give visitors the pioneer experience of the Blue Ridge Mountains, has opened to the public for the first time.

June 14, 1993
Exploring the wilderness

Want to get a better picture of what's happening at the Explore Park? Then drop by one of the two open houses the frontier-history state park is holding on Rutrough Road this Saturday. "The place is shaping up and we'd like people to see it," said Ripert Cutler, Explore's environmental director. By the way, Explore just received a \$4,600 grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency to set up environmental programs for high school and elementary students.

August 16, 1993
Explore on the move

The Explore Park has a new home. Its staff has moved out of the Liberty Trust building on Jefferson Street in downtown Roanoke and taken up temporary residence at the Vinton War Memorial. Moving out of downtown will save the [River] Foundation about \$2,200 a month in rent, Cutler said.

October 1, 1993
The Franklin News-Post Rocky Mount
Fintel is named to post
Cutler named director

The River Foundation Board of Directors has elected Dr. Norman D. Fintel as president and chairman of the board. Fintel announced that he was naming Dr. M. Rupert Cutler as Explore Park dissector. In his new position, Fintel said, he will be in charge of all Explore Park operations. Two buildings, the Hofauger House and the Wray Barn, are completed.

October 11, 1993
Explore doesn't weigh heavily on candidates' minds (Dwayne Yancey)

What will the next governor do to see that something comes of the state's \$11 million investment in the Explore Park? That's hard to say because unlike in previous campaigns, this time the candidates are avoiding the question. Gerald Baliles may be best remembered as Virginia's road-building governor, but in the Roanoke Valley one of his most enduring legacies is 1,300 acres of woods and fields just outside the city limits that are now in state hands. The Explore Park.

December 17, 1993
The Franklin News-Post Rocky Mount
Explore Park get schoolhouse

A one-room schoolhouse from Franklin County has been donated to Explore Park's "living history" frontier settlement. The gift was formally announced at the park Tuesday by Explore Park officials and member of the late Horace Fralin's family. The Fralin family donated both the building and money to cover the cost of moving and rebuilding it. Fralin's brother, Heywood, said the expenses are expected to run about \$50,000.

December 24, 1993
Kingsport Times-News
Philip Morris funds trail in park

Tobacco giant Philip Morris USA plans to give Virginia's Explore Park \$52,000 to develop a trail through the park's replica of a 19th century Blue Ridge settlement. The money will help

complete work on the "Wagon Road West" trail in time for the park's scheduled opening May 4, said Rupert Cutler.

January 7, 1994

Editorial: A hot prospect for Explore Park

The immediate attraction, of course, is the money. Marrying Explore Park to the Virginia Museum of Natural History would put the former under a state agency and almost certainly help it get some much-needed state funding.

January 7, 1994

Church to get second life at Explore

The historic Mountain Union Church in southern Botetourt County will be taken apart, then put back together at Explore Park.

January 12, 1994

County supports a regional agenda (op ed by Supervisor Harry Nickens)

Roanoke County has committed \$350,000 to up-grade an access road and another \$100,000 to enhance the opening of Explore Park in May 1994.

January 15, 1994

Explore to open month before its funding stops; Park searches for more cash
Virginia's Explore Park is scheduled to open to the public in May, a month before the organization that funds the park's payroll will stop footing that bill.

January 16, 1994

Martinsville Bulletin

Explore chief to avoid political merger fight

The director of Virginia's Explore Park sad he is steering clear of the politics of selling the idea of a merger among the park, the Virginia Museum of Natural History, and two state agencies.

January 24, 1994

School name changed

The 100-year-old, one-room schoolhouse moved from the Smith Mountain Lake area of Franklin County for reconstruction at Explore Park will be known as "Kemps Ford School."

January 30, 1994

Cutchins to chair Explore board

M. Rupert Cutler of Roanoke was appointed executive director of the Virginia Recreational Facilities Authority. He will continue as director of Explore Park and supervisor of the River Foundation's staff.

February 23, 1994

Associated Press (The Free Lance-Star Fredericksburg and others)

Park may get state funding

A Roanoke County park intended to re-create life on the Appalachian frontier finally may receive operating money from the state. Sen. Brandon Bell said that Explore likely will get at least \$400,000 per year that the House Appropriations Committee is recommending.

May 5, 1994

City to give Explore \$50,000

For the first time, Roanoke City Council has responded to Virginia's Explore Park for money. Council voted 5-2 Wednesday to give \$50,000 to the park.

May 5, 1994

Associated Press (Martinsville Bulletin and others)

Explore set to open living-history park

Cutler said the lack of funding will mean the park will have seven or eight interpreters guiding tourists at the park, about four fewer than they need. "It has been nine years in the planning, but Explore Park has become a reality," Cutler told about 40 people in a century-old barn.

May 22, 1994

Big, small gifts help make dream reality to Explore

The biggest donations to Explore Park haven't been six-figure checks. They've been piles of material and hundreds of hours given by volunteers to help get the park ready for its opening this summer.

June 12, 1994

Richmond Times-Dispatch

Dream altered, but theme unchanged

Virginia's newest theme park is getting ready to open next month, but it won't have a cute rodent mascot or a scream-inducing water flume ride. It will finally open July 2 in more modest fashion.

June 17, 1994

The Franklin News-Post Rocky Mount

Explore Park to get \$36,000 gift

The Bell Atlantic corporation announced a \$36,000 gift to the River Foundation for architectural design of an education campus at the new living history park in Roanoke County.

June 22, 1994

Associated Press (Daily Press Newport News and others)

Against odds, Explore Park to open

June 26, 1994

Explore endures to finally open

The day many thought would never happen—and others thought shouldn't—finally arrives this Saturday; Virginia's Explore Park.

June 30, 1994

Why bother going home?

With Saturday's grand opening looming, workers are rushing to get Virginia's Explore Park ready for the public. For some, that means working till midnight and sleeping over at the park.

July 2, 1994
VIPs volley at Explore

What would Explore be without a little controversy? The park's grand opening ceremony Friday was a day for celebration—and some finger-pointing. Some of the main participants spent time taking shots at one another. Del. Richard Cranwell used the occasion to make what many Republicans in the audience considered an attack on Gov. George Allen, who just the day before sacked six members of Explore's governing body—including the board's chairman, vice chairman, and former chairman.

July 2, 1994
Editorial: Finally, an open Explore Park

After nine years and almost as many lives, Virginia's Explore Park formally and finally opens to the public today. An advance event was held Friday with speeches, refreshments and walking tours for Explore's closet friends—about 750 of 'em. For a while, it looked like each and every one was going to give a speech.... That success would be an unalloyed asset to the region: an attraction and economic asset that also preserves precious natural resources.

July 2, 1994
Associated Press (Daily News, Jacksonville, NC, and others)
Virginia unveils frontier attraction; Explore Park off Blue Ridge Parkway

"This is still a work in progress," said Explore director Rupert Cutler. But Secretary of Commerce and Trade Robert T. Skanda said Explore Park is a boost to Virginia's \$9 billion tourism industry.

July 4, 1994
The Franklin News-Post Rocky Mount
Explore celebrates opening

"Oh, what a wonderful day," exclaimed Explore Park Director Rupert Cutler as he began grand opening ceremonies Friday for the new living history park off the Blue Ridge Parkway in Roanoke County.

July 18, 1994
Associated Press (the News-Virginian Waynesboro and others)
Disney America, Explore Park Plans Look Similar

If imitation is indeed the sincerest form of flattery, then the original designers of the recently opened Explore Park must have been blushing after seeing the plans for Disney's America.

July 31, 1994
Explore Park gets a manager

George W. Nester of Vinton has been appointed general manager of Virginia's Explore Park. Nester will be responsible for management of park operations while Rupert Cutler, who is chief executive officer of both the River Foundation and the Virginia Recreational Facilities Authority,

will oversee Explore's long-range planning, state and national fundraising, and community and government relations.

August 8, 1994

Commentary: Heritage Tourism

John Kern, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Explore can bring life to our story

The 1840 Hofauger Farmstead from Roanoke County will have a different story from the 1800 Houtz Barn from Salem. I am confident Explore Park can meet the challenges I have outlined, and become a major center for the understanding and enjoyment of our wonderful regional history.

August 14, 1994

Step back into history at Virginia's Explore Park

At Explore, visitors can see what life was like when the Blue Ridge Mountains were the nation's western frontier. By the late 1990s, says Explore director Rupert Cutler, the park would like to move on to the most expensive part of the project—the zoo of North American animals.

September 26, 1994

Outdoors: Explore, What's in it for an outdoorsman?

So what does Explore have to offer the outdoorsman who wants to probe beyond the zig-zagging chestnut rail fences? "Many of the trails are old logging roads that have been brushed out and connected with short sections of switchbacks," said Rupert Cutler, executive director of the park. "I think it is the kind of hiking that a family with kids would do."

October 1, 1994

Explore lays off 7 staffers

Explore Park, in a move to save money, announced Friday the layoffs of seven employees, including chief engineer Richard Burrow, who nurtured the growth of a vague idea in the early 1980s into the living-history park that opened to the public this summer. Director Rupert Cutler said the decision was difficult, but was made on behalf of the park, which is \$220,000 in debt.

October 31, 1994

Before layoff, he helped make Explore a reality

As Explore Park's engineer, Richard Burrow left his mark on the Roanoke Valley in a big way. Then the park laid him off.

November 20, 1994

Nonprofits

Paul Torgerson, president of Virginia Tech, and W. Heywood Fralick, a Roanoke attorney, have been elected to the board of the River Foundation, Explore Park's private fund-raising arm.

December 5, 1994

The Franklin News-Post Rocky Mount

Park attracts 20,000 in first season

Explore Park in Roanoke County attracted over 20,000 visitors in its initial season, exceeding earlier projections, according to Park Director Rupert Cutler.

January 10, 1995

Parkway spur step closer to reality

The spur road connecting Explore Park with the parkway appears close to being put out to bid. Getting the spur road built is “the most important issue before us,” Explore Director Rupert Cutler told a joint meeting of Roanoke City Council and the Roanoke County Board of Supervisors on Monday. Federal officials have never dealt with a parkway going over a landfill, so that will take longer. The Federal Highway Administration has designed the road, will put the road out to bid, and will oversee construction.

January 12, 1995

Cutler, Fintel lobby for Explore funds

Explore Park Director Rupert Cutler didn’t spend all those years in Washington without learning a few tricks—such as the old Washington Monument play. Explore plans to lay on a heavy lobbying effort in the General Assembly to get the cut funds restored; both Cutler and former Roanoke College President Notman Fintel, who heads the park’s private fund-raising arm, will be in Richmond buttonholing legislators.

March 16, 1995

Explore still hasn’t paid its bills

Park administrators say they hope to pay off most of the \$203,000 debt this spring by selling two pieces of surplus property.

May 15, 1995

Road Rescue

Virginia’s Explore Park survived another funding scare last week when Congress came close to eliminating federal funding for the yet-to-be-built access road that will connect the park with the Blue Ridge Parkway. Congress approved \$12 million for the road back in 1987. Rep. Bob Goodlatte swung into action and funding for the Explore road was saved.

June 8, 1995

Director optimistic about Explore season

Cutler estimated that this year’s attendance will reach 50,000 before the 1,300-acre park closes in October.

August 13, 1995

With Explore Park, valley a destination

Now, travelers have both a reason to stop and to come back to the parkway and the Roanoke Valley. Explore opened last year as a living history museum. “We have a combination of history and nature that’s unique,” said Rupert Cutler, the park’s executive director.

September 7, 1995

\$1 million given to Explore Park

The biggest donations in Explore's history will help the park build a long-awaited attraction—a high-profile restaurant. The project will be funded by gifts of \$750,000 from the Horace Fralin Charitable Trust and \$250,000 from the Beirne Carter Foundation, according to Rupert Cutler, Explore's executive director. Brugh Tavern is being moved from its 200-year-old site in Botetourt County.

September 20, 1995
Church move awaited

Explore Park officials said Tuesday that donations totaling \$75,000 will cover the initial costs of moving historic Mountain Union Church from Botetourt County to the park.

September 30, 1995
'Explore' won't mean finding it

Cutler received word that a contractor has been chosen to build a road from the Blue Ridge Parkway to Explore Park in 1997. E.C. English Inc. of Lynchburg was picked to pave the two-land extension of the parkway. The Federal Highway Administration accepted the company's bid of \$9.68 million over that of four other bidders, two from out of state.

November 9, 1995
Explore to add education facility

An educational facility will be built at Virginia's Explore Park as a memorial to the late John W. Hancock. The Hancock Education Center will include a classroom and laboratory building. Norman Fintel said the funds to design and build the center will come exclusively from private sources. He said gifts totaling almost \$1million have been donated to the project by several corporations and friends of Hancock. Corporate contributors include Roanoke Electric Steel Corp., NationsBank, Crestar Bank, and Bell Atlantic.

November 25, 1995
7,000 schoolchildren explored Explore Park
Total visitors this year neared 21,200

Rupert Cutler, Explore's executive director, said the schools bring students to the park to learn about the Virginia frontier.

December 5, 1995
Getting ready to dig in

(Photo cutline) Rupert Cutler, executive director of Explore Park, holds the ceremonial shovel as he listens to featured speakers before the groundbreaking for Roanoke River Parkway.

December 19, 1995
What [Governor] Allen's budget means
Explore now a budget fixture?

Explore Park \$400,000. This is the first time since 1988 that a governor has proposed funds for Explore. In recent years, Explore has won funding because Roanoke Valley legislators have

succeeded in amending the state budget. "It's a real breakthrough. It signifies that Explore Park is a truly nonpartisan program that's as strongly supported by Republicans as by Democrats."--
Rupert Cutler, Explore Park executive director

August 22, 1996

Explore Park's rent shows museum is on road to success

Roanoke's living-history museum is out of debt and giving a boost to its fund-raising partner

Although \$170,000 worth of start-up debts remain on River Foundation's books, Explore officials said it is a milestone to clear up the park authority's liabilities. "It creates a longer-term sense of stability," said Executive Director Rupert Cutler. "It's a better business climate."

October 24, 1996

Western Va. Land Trust established

Landowners urged to protect views

A Roanoke group has been formed to block development that spoils views and historic sites in Western Virginia. The Western Virginia Land Trust on Wednesday adopted bylaws and elected officers—its first official business. The group's president is Barbara Lemon. Its vice president is Rupert Cutler, executive director of Explore Park.

October 29, 1996

Park goes out with a 'bang'

Explore Park closed to the public on Monday after a few more school field trips, next month will shut for the winter. Rupert Cutler described October as a 'bang' of a month in a news release, because Explore Park had nearly 10,000 visitors, three times the number during most months.

November 8, 1996

Cutler exploring new post

Will lead regional preservation group

The driving force who has seen Explore Park through its infancy said Thursday [November 7] he'll resign to start a regional land-preservation group. Rupert Cutler will become executive director of the Western Virginia Land Trust in Roanoke. The new non-profit organization will strive to keep development away from ridges, views, animal habitats and historic places. Hired as an environmental educator, he later paved the way for the 1994 opening of the state park. "I'll be moving from one great job to another. I love Explore Park and will leave part of my heart at Explore Park." --Rupert Cutler, Director, Explore Park

November 9, 1996

Editorial: A bigger dream to save the land

Rupert Cutler took hold of an ambitious dream when he became executive director of the embryonic Explore Park, and from it helped create a successful, albeit more modest and still emerging reality. This week he announced plans to leave Explore, to take on yet another embryonic dream. It will be the job once again of the irrepressible Cutler to convert fancies into facts.