

A collage of anecdotes: Using pictures to stir the pot of the area's history and links to the Bryson City Cemetery

Don Casada, Feb 23. 2021

Photo sources

TVA = Tennessee Valley Authority (photos from Kodak negative collection at the Atlanta National Archives)

GRSM = Great Smoky Mountains National Park (photos from the Open Parks Network or courtesy of Mike Aday, Park Librarian)

Stearns-Grueninger = Stearns-Grueninger Collection, Western Carolina University, donated by FBCC member Carl Grueninger III and his sister Ann G. Ferguson

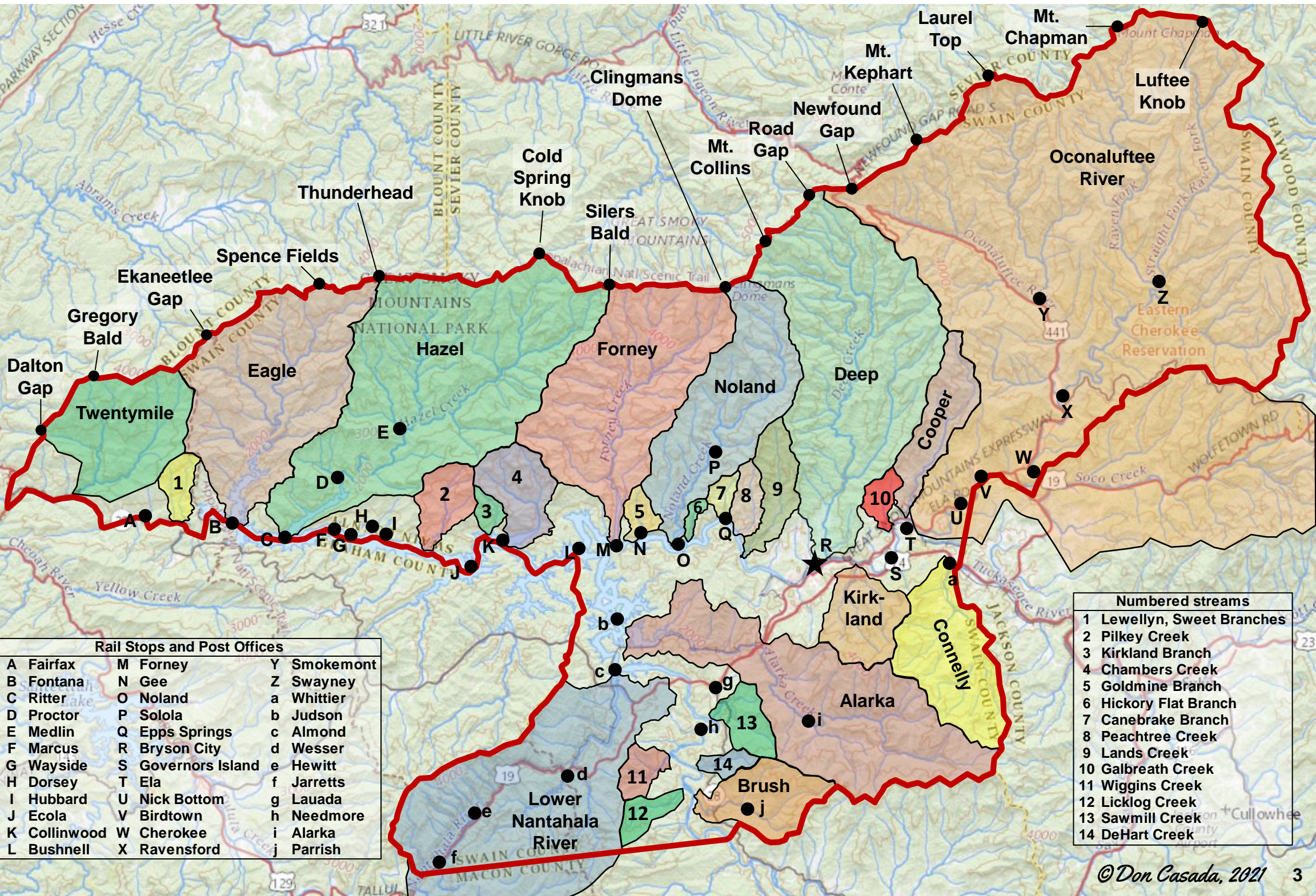
Frank Fry = Frank Fry Collection, Western Carolina University, donated by FBCC member Jean Douthit

Various private sources, individually noted

When you come to a fork in the road, take it -
and the next one and the next one.....

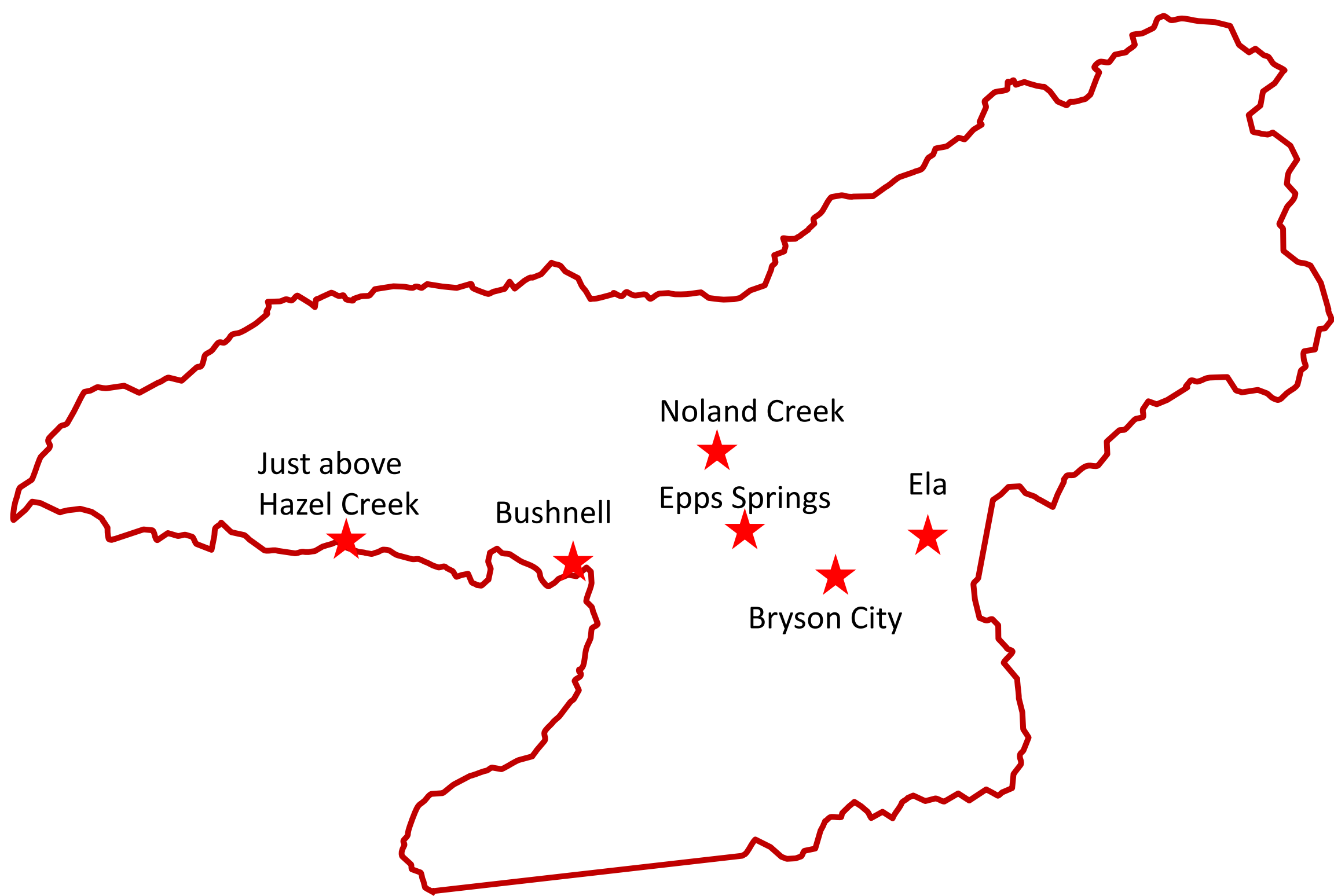
- Gorges and brush piles
- Epsom salts
- Dams and electricity
- Floods and movies
- Rich yankees and trout water
- Bridges and buildings

Swain County drainages, post offices and rail stops



Rail Stops and Post Offices					
A	Fairfax	M	Forney	Y	Smokemont
B	Fontana	N	Gee	Z	Swayney
C	Ritter	O	Noland	a	Whittier
D	Proctor	P	Solola	b	Judson
E	Medlin	Q	Epps Springs	c	Almond
F	Marcus	R	Bryson City	d	Wesser
G	Wayside	S	Governors Island	e	Hewitt
H	Dorsey	T	Ela	f	Jarretts
I	Hubbard	U	Nick Bottom	g	Lauada
J	Ecola	V	Birdtown	h	Needmore
K	Collinwood	W	Cherokee	i	Alarka
L	Bushnell	X	Ravensford	j	Parrish

Numbered streams	
1	Lewellyn, Sweet Branches
2	Pilkey Creek
3	Kirkland Branch
4	Chambers Creek
5	Goldmine Branch
6	Hickory Flat Branch
7	Canebrake Branch
8	Peachtree Creek
9	Lands Creek
10	Galbreath Creek
11	Wiggins Creek
12	Licklog Creek
13	Sawmill Creek
14	DeHart Creek



Locations of photos to be shown.

The stars mark locations where photos that are shown in the following slides were taken.



Note the multiple telegraph and telephone lines which followed the railroad.

TVA photo 14112C, April 26, 1943. Teacher Van Johnson and Epps Springs School students. The school building was also used for a church. The brush on the hillside above the school was cut by TVA in preparation for the flooding of Fontana. The tree line indicates approximate full pool level. During winter drawdown, the water falls below the former school foundation, but there is no physical evidence to mark it other than piles of stones – which may or may not be remnants of the foundation pillars. Children from Peachtree Creek, Middle Peachtree and Canebrake Branches attended the school. The building stood about 500 feet east of the mouth of Canebrake Branch.

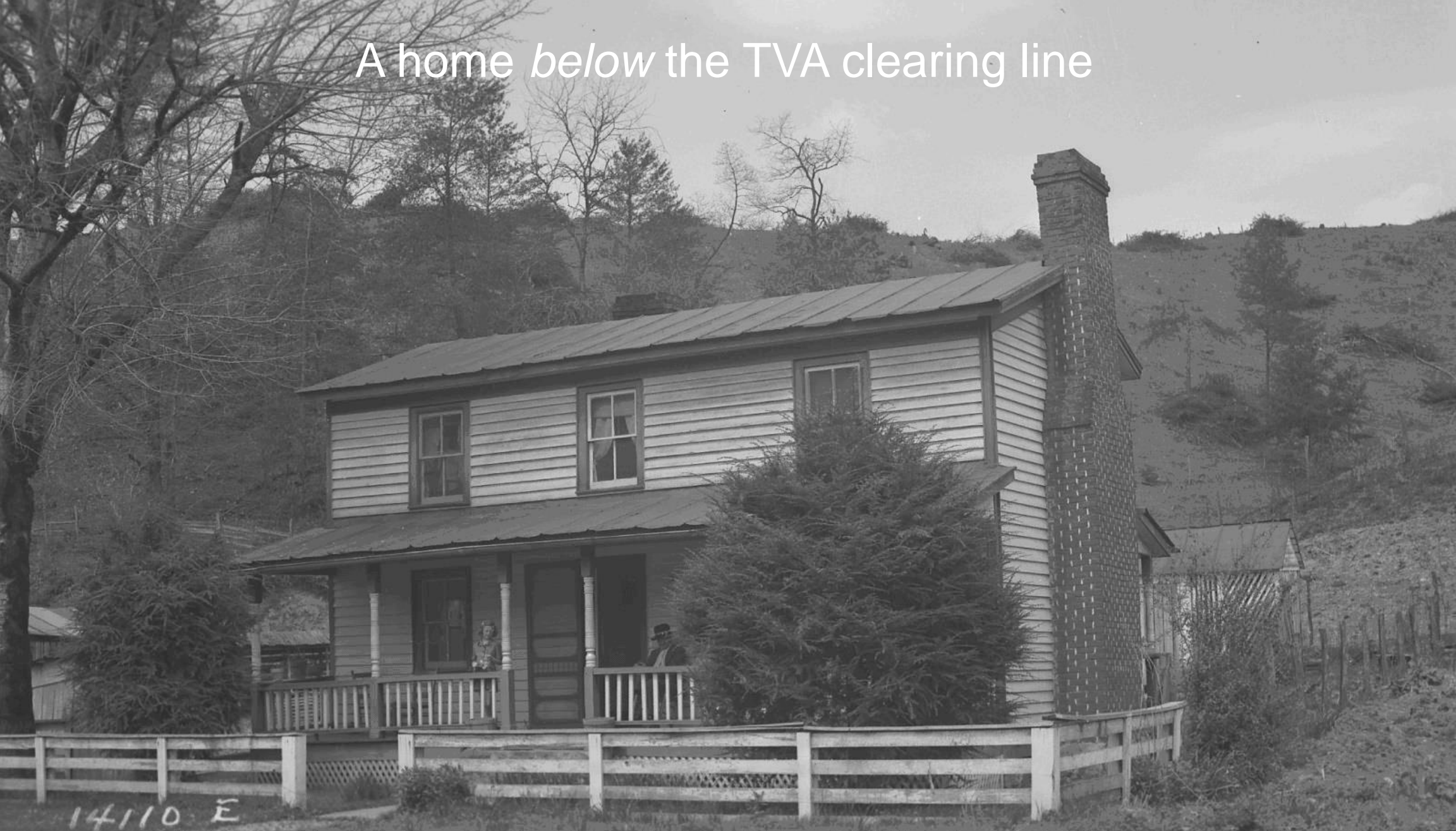


Tree line = Fontana full pool water level

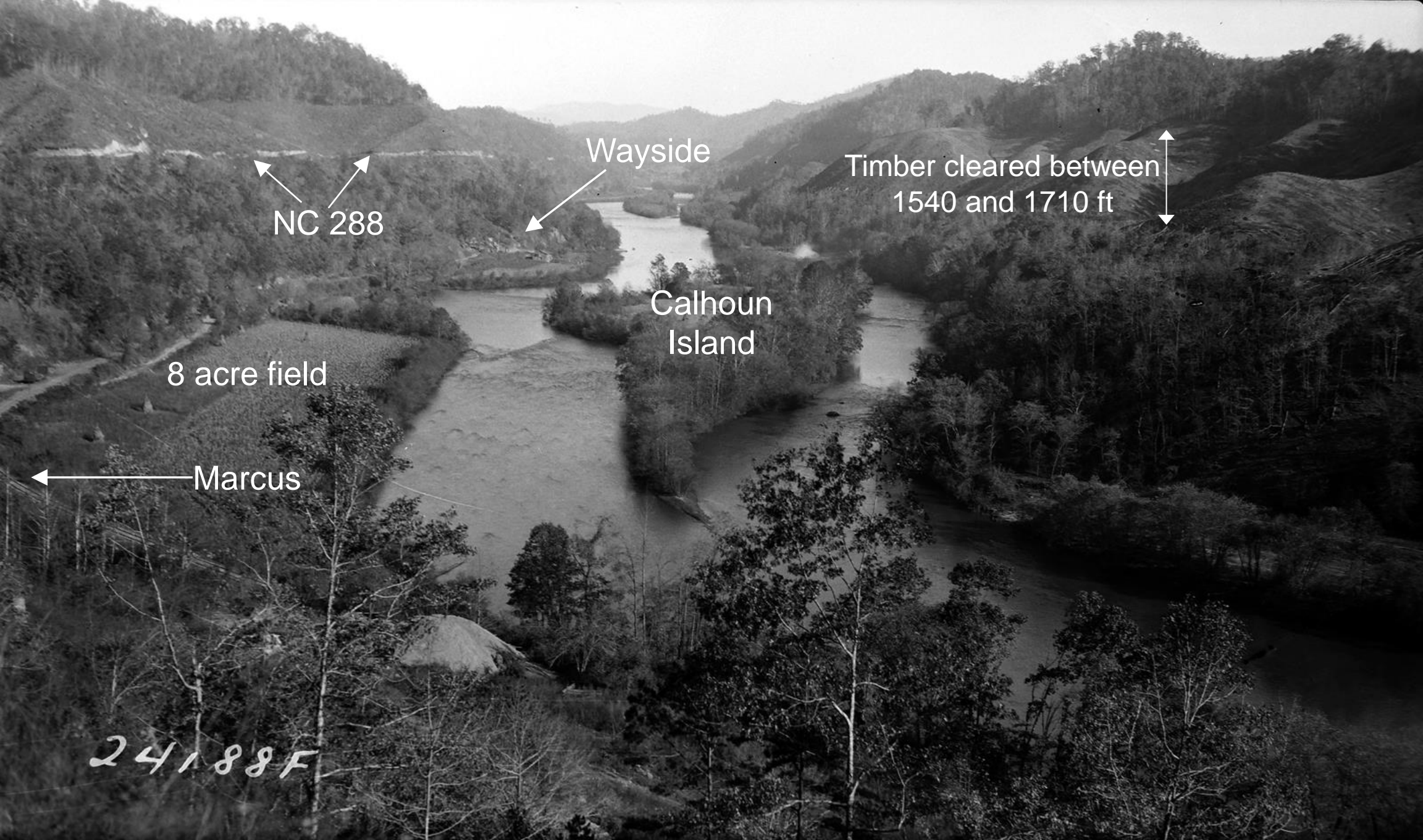
27093-A

TVA 27093A, July 7, 1943. View of the Epps Springs school building and beyond, a home near the mouth of Canebrake Branch. The extent of land cleared of trees here is relatively small; the river elevation here was about 1650 feet; full pool level is 1710 feet. TVA's winter drawdown routinely drops sufficiently that a walk along the river and lake to Canebrake can be easily made when the ground is frozen. Much of the land which lies alongside the Tuckasegee River below Lands Creek and the lower reaches of the Little Tennessee all the way to the state line is gorge-like in nature, just like this area. Bottomland along the rivers was rare and precious, and of course is now well under Fontana's waters. The full pool water line is marked by the tree line in this photo. Most homes were along the streams which emptied into the rivers. As an illustration, there were ten home places on Canebrake Branch with just the one near the river seen here. The next home was a third of a mile up the branch.

A home *below* the TVA clearing line



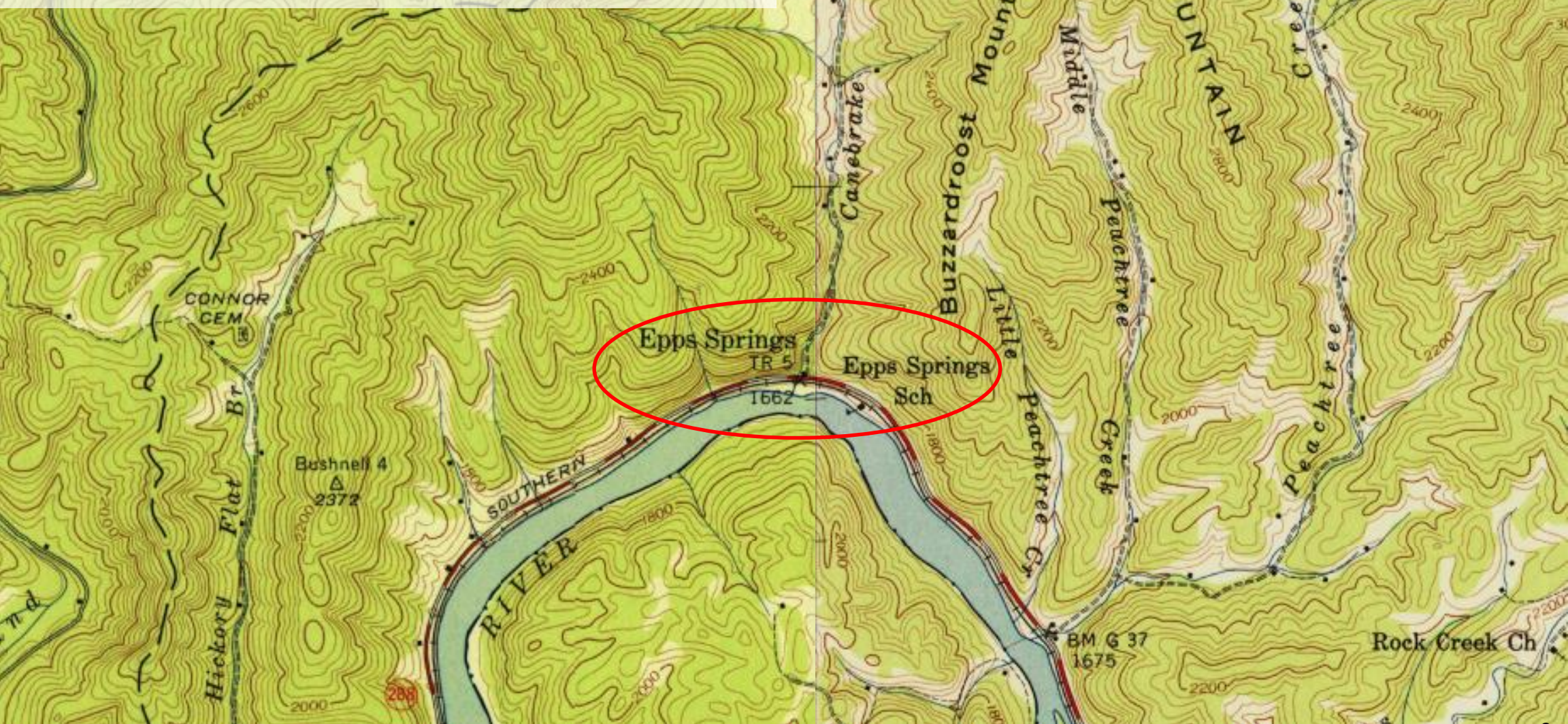
TVA 14110 E, [Columbus](#) and [JC Welch](#) home; photo taken from next to railroad, which ran in front of the home. The home was about ¼ mile below the Bushnell depot and at 1475 ft elevation. The brush piles in this photo are illustrative of the lower limit of the TVA clearing process. Trees were cleared down to the 1540 ft elevation – about 65 ft above ground level at the home, so trees near the house weren't cut. The girl in this photo is likely Vivian Muse Macon, who some of our members will remember. The man is likely Columbus Welch (according to his first cousin, once removed and director of Friends of the Bryson City Cemetery, Dan Welch). Columbus, his siblings J.C., Josephine Welch and husband Rollins Thomasson, Minnie Welch and husband Rufus Gamewell Coffey and Nellie Welch and husband Troy Muse (parents of Vivian). So are their parents, JET and Emeline Gunter Welch, cousin Elbert Welch and his wife Edith Fisher (parents of Dan Welch and his sister Virginia Gribble). The extended Welch clan is likely the largest family in the Bryson City Cemetery.



TVA 24188F, Looking up the Little Tennessee from near the mouth of Calhoun Branch. The photographer was on NC 288 at about 1600 ft elevation. Marcus and Wayside are sometimes cited as lost towns or villages. But the fact is that they were a post office location (Wayside) and rail stop (Marcus); neither had more than a handful of structures. The vast majority of homes were – as was the case with Canebrake – well away from the river gorge, along feeder streams and small branches. The eight acre field shown here at Marcus is one of the larger relatively level areas along the river from below Bushnell to the state line.

Back to Epps Springs

This map is pieced together from parts of the 1941 Bryson City and Judson Quadrangles. Prior to Fontana, Epps Springs was a named place on USGS maps. It was also considered as a community name, one which included neighboring Peachtree, Middle Peachtree and Little Peachtree Creeks. Roads led from NC 288, which itself was a gravel road, up all of the streams; while there were some foot paths between drainages, there were no interconnecting roads.



EPSS SPRING, SWAIN COUNTY.

This spring is located at the foot of East Canebrake Knob, about 5 miles west of Bryson City and 150 yards up Canebrake Branch from Epps Spring, a station on the Murphy branch of the Southern Railway. There is a small hotel, containing 12 rooms, that has been built for the accommodation of guests, which is within 50 yards of this spring, and has running water. There are 500 acres of ground belonging to the spring property, which is largely covered with timber, as oak, poplar, chestnut and some pine. Although there have been but little improvements made on this property, it offers a favorable location for building up a mineral spring resort, as the spring has exceptional medicinal properties, as is seen from the analysis given below. Canebrake Branch offers sufficient power to develop electricity for lighting the hotel.

The water from Epps Spring gushes out from the rock on the west side of a steep hill and is within about 30 feet of Canebrake Branch, but well above it. The flow of the spring is 1 gallon in 3 minutes. The temperature of the water was 60° F. in the summer of 1908.

About 60 yards from the Epps Spring and on the opposite side of Canebrake Branch there is another spring, known as the Dairy Spring, which has also been analyzed, and, on account of the great contrast between the two, this analysis is also given.

The analysis of the Epps Spring showed an unusually large amount of solid matter, about one-fourth of this being magnesium sulphate, epsom salts, which gives the spring very high medicinal properties. On the other hand, the Dairy Spring showed a small content of mineral matter, but is a very pure water. The analyses of these waters were made by Mr. A. S. Wheeler, of the University of North Carolina, who reported the results in a hypothetical form of combination, as follows:

ANALYSES OF EPSS SPRING AND DAIRY SPRING MINERAL WATERS.

Name and Formula.	Parts per 1,000,000.	
	Epps Spring.	Dairy Spring.
Sodium chloride (NaCl)	10.9	6.59
Sodium sulphate (Na ₂ SO ₄)	38.1	3.79
Potassium sulphate (K ₂ SO ₄)	13.8	2.78
Magnesium sulphate (MgSO ₄)	303.1	
Calcium sulphate (CaSO ₄)	884.0	16.24
Magnesium bicarbonate (Mg(HCO ₃) ₂)	23.9	4.02
Calcium bicarbonate (Ca(HCO ₃) ₂)	61.6	10.35
Iron oxide (Fe ₂ O ₃)	20.0	1.97
Alumina (Al ₂ O ₃)		
Free carbon dioxide gas (CO ₂)	noted	none
Silica (SiO ₂)	12.0	15.7
Total solids at 110° C	1367.4	61.44

Epp's Spring Hotel

FIVE MILES WEST OF BRYSON CITY, N. C.

A rough boxed building on the Southern Railway, opened for the season. Neatly and nicely furnished. Climate and scenery unsurpassed. Bass fishing excellent.

Medicinal waters of this Spring are splendid for stomach and kidney diseases. Nine medicinal ingredients found by Joseph Hyde Pratt, State Geologist, and strongly recommended by him.

Rates \$1.00 and \$1.50 per Day. Special rates by the month.

J. H. EVERETT, Proprietor

Bryson City, North Carolina.

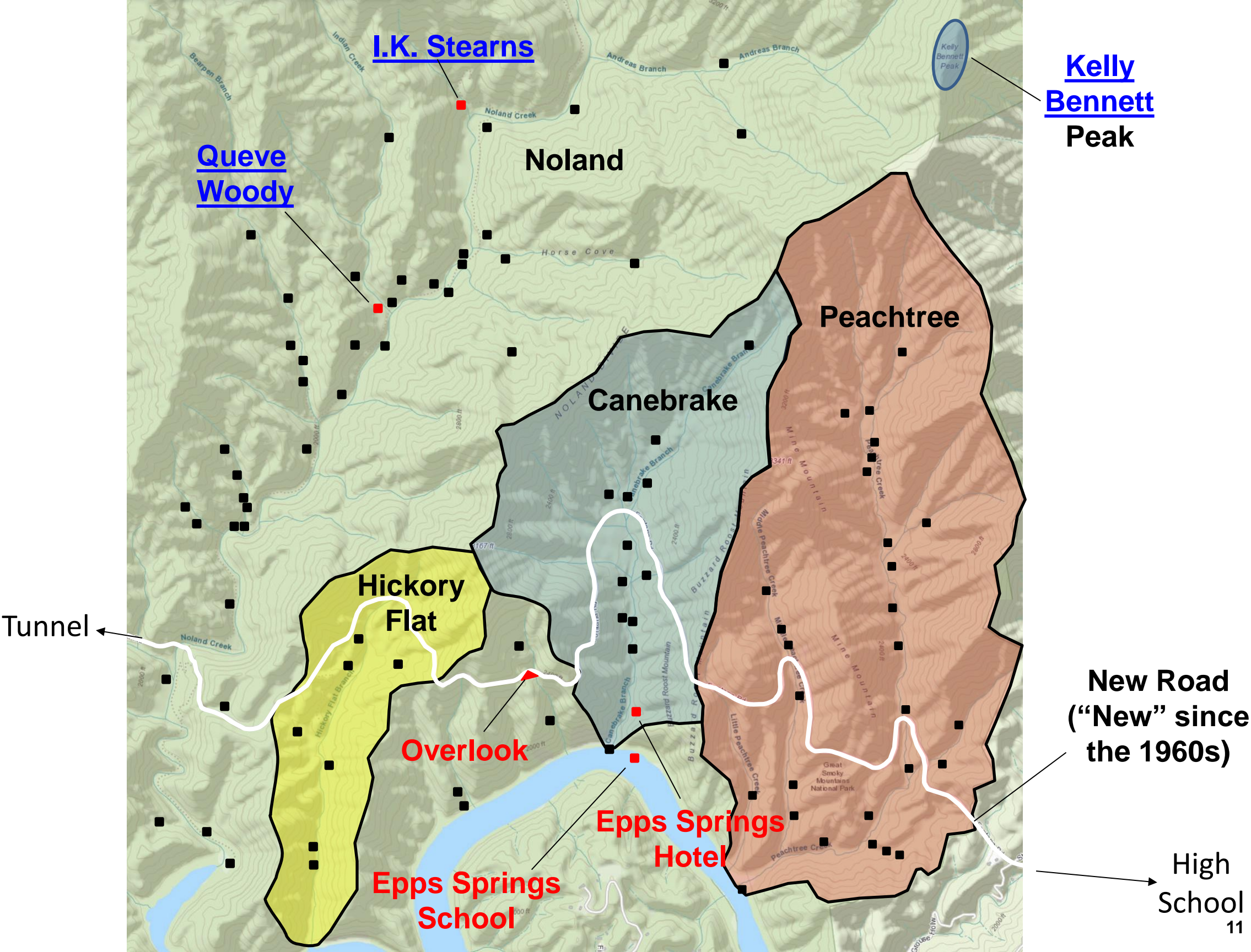
WANTED—YOUR WIFE

To drink VITALIZER (formerly Epps') Mineral Spring Water and have the glow of health in her cheeks. Compounded by Nature amid the Smoky Mountains of Swain County. It is superior to drugs. Among its ingredients are 20 grains of magnesia and 1.16 grains per gallon of iron. Not enough to irritate the stomach, but sufficient to restore impaired digestion and tone up the system. It will produce virility, vigor and vitality. "Its wonderful medicinal properties are well known to our home people."—Bryson City Times. "It deserves extensive use."—Dr. J. Hyde Pratt, State Geologist. "I believe it the greatest of all mineral waters."—Mrs. A. B. Alhson, Webster, N. C., wife of the Barnett Dry Goods Co.'s well known representative. "I have witnessed many wonderful cures made by it."—J. L. Gibson, Mgr. Bryson City branch Slayden-Fakes Co. "I believe the water saved my life."—Wm. J. Woodard, Noland, N. C. "I cannot commend it too highly."—J. M. Welch (Jeweler) Bryson City, N. C.

If you use ten gallons and report no benefit, your money will be refunded. Call phone 2988 and the agent will deliver the water at your door. P575-24-7

Ads: Epp's Spring Hotel (1907) and Vitalizer Mineral Spring Water (1914)

Epps Spring(s) took its name from Eppaphroditus "Epp" Everett, who at one time owned over 80% of the land in the Canebrake drainage, and included a mineral spring which had considerable mineral content, including what was, by far, the highest magnesium sulfate content of any measured mineral spring in the state. Another name for magnesium sulfate is Epsom Salts, so perhaps there was a double basis for the name Epps Springs. The name is listed in the North Carolina Gazetteer, but no longer appears on USGS maps and is not officially a named place today. John Henderson "J.H." Everett, son of Epp, and John Manous "J.M." Welch whose names are highlighted here, are buried in the Bryson City Cemetery. The former homes of both men are seen in subsequent photos.



I.K. Stearns

Kelly Bennett Peak

Queue Woody

Noland

Peachtree

Canebrake

Hickory Flat

Tunnel

Overlook

New Road ("New" since the 1960s)

Epps Springs Hotel

Epps Springs School

High School 11

I.K. Stearns cabin on Noland Creek



The I.K. Stearns cabin nearing completion. It is about three miles up Noland Creek from the trailhead. The cabin was burned down in the 1970s, but the chimney (unseen in this photo) still stands. The trail which leads to the lower Noland Creek Cemetery passes by the house. In the branch just above the home was a water collection box, the remains of which can still be seen. That box collected water not only for use at the Stearns cabin, but at a home quarter of a mile away, on the other side of Noland Creek. That home was called the Patterson Place, for former Swain County Sheriff and Noland Postmaster S.R. Patterson. The home was lived in by the family of Cole and Fannie Brendle Hyatt (see the next photo) at the time when I.K. had the cabin built.

From Stearns-Grueninger collection at WCU, donated by FBCC Member Carl Grueninger III, great nephew of [I.K.](#) and [Betty Grueninger Stearns](#).

Cole and Fannie Brendle Hyatt; their children Lawrence and Lucille with 400 pound bear skin



The Hyatt family lived at the Patterson place on the opposite side of Noland Creek from the I.K. Stearns. Cole Hyatt worked for Philip Rust, a wealthy northeasterner who married into the DuPont family. Rust acquired 4365 acres of land on Noland Creek. Other than the tracts owned by I.K. Stearns, Queve Woody and several members of the LeQuire and Ball families, Rust owned all of the property from the current Noland Creek trailhead to the Park line prior to TVA. He attempted to raise sheep on Noland Creek. According to Lawrence Hyatt, Rust had an electric fence built around an area for sheep to graze. A bear got bitten by the fence on the way in and decided that staying inside the fence with all the sheep wasn't such a bad deal. I'm not sure if this was the skin of that bear or another. From Stearns-Grueninger collection at WCU, donated by FBCC Member Carl Grueninger III, great nephew of [I.K.](#) and [Betty Grueninger Stearns](#).

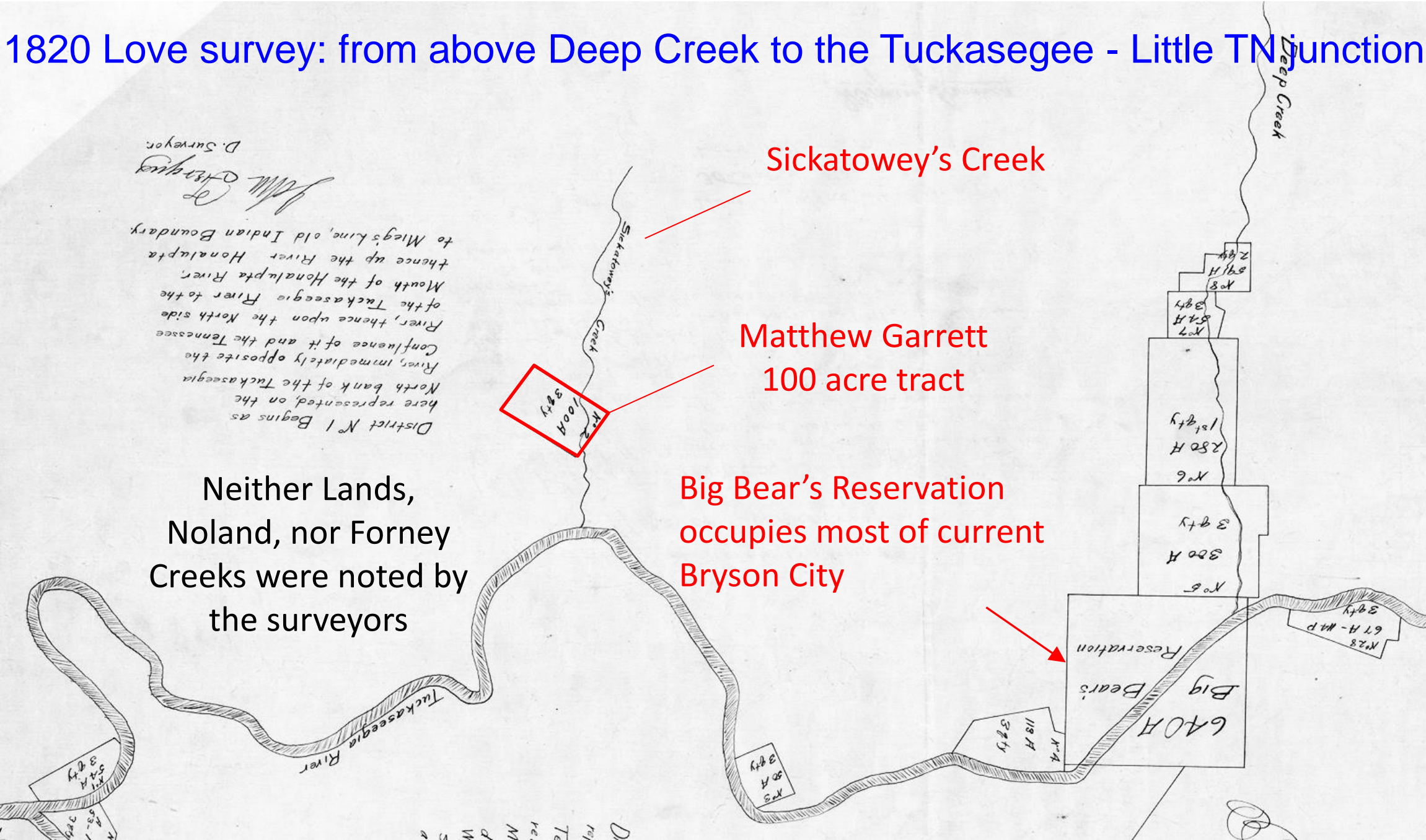
Group at the Queve Woody cabin on Noland Creek



Photo source: Rick and Christine Colcord. Rick is a great-grandson of Cristenia (or Christine) Woody.

L-R: [I.K. Stearns](#), I.K.'s dogs Joe Ghost and Kip, [Queve Woody, Sr](#), Queve's mother [Cristenia Thomas Woody](#), [Betty Grueninger Stearns](#), [Nell Leatherwood](#), unknown girl, [Cora Wilson Woody](#), [Miss Jess Shank](#) and Queve Woody, Jr. The Queve Woody cabin on Noland stood next to (south of) the mouth of Indian Creek, less than two miles from the Noland Creek trailhead. It had a brick chimney which can't be seen here (it is now laying on the ground about 50 yards from the Noland Creek trail). Queve Woody, Sr. was superintendent of Carolina Wood Turning for a time. He lost part of his left arm in an accident there.

1820 Love survey: from above Deep Creek to the Tuckasegee - Little TN junction

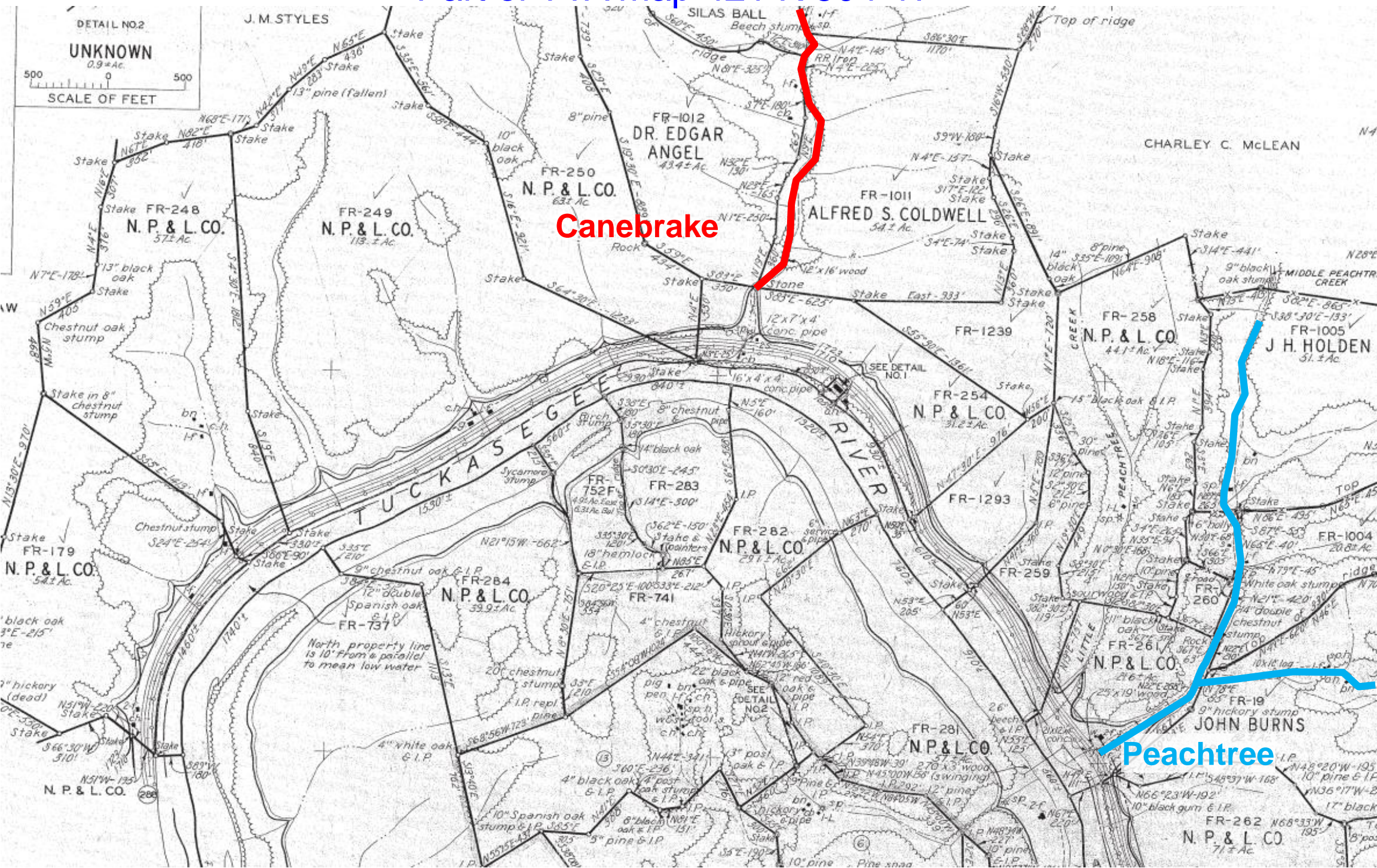


In 1855, Matthew Garrett received a 100 acre land grant which made reference to Sickatowey's place, a peach orchard and an old Indian path. Considerable other property on the creek was acquired by the Garrett family, including daughter Sarah.

Garrett was the father of [Latitia Garrett Hill](#) and family patriarch of numerous others in the Bryson City Cemetery, with surnames such as [Garrett](#), [Hyde](#), [Mitchell](#), [Moody](#) and [Penland](#). FBCC member Melody Greene is a g-g-g granddaughter of Matthew Garrett. Contributor Lawrence Hyatt is a g-g grandson.

Interestingly, not a single other marked site for purchase under the 1820 survey was found from below Lands Creek to the junction of the Tuckasegee and Little TN Rivers, where the town of Bushnell would later spring up. In addition to the Love survey map and the Garrett land grant, other early deeds made reference to Sickatowey's place. The Lakeview Road (or New Road) of today passes through the Garrett land grant.

Part of TVA map 421 K 504-17



As indicated by this map segment, Nantahala Power & Light (NP&L) had already purchased almost all of the land along the Tuckasegee and Little Tennessee Rivers which would be flooded by Fontana. None of the privately-owned land on Canebrake, Peachtree, Hickory Flat or Noland Creek would be affected; however, the existing NC 288 road access was lost. NP&L had previously expressed intentions to build multiple smaller dams (vs. a single large one).

Swain, Graham, and Macon Counties wanted Alcoa (Nantahala Power) to build dams along the Little Tennessee, not TVA

The petition and all signatures can be seen [here](#).

P E T I T I O N

TO

SWAIN COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA

Dr. A. E. Morgan
T. V. A.
Knoxville, Tennessee

Franklin D. Roosevelt,
President of the
United States,
Washington, D. C.

Hon. Harold S. Ickes
Secretary of Interior,
Washington, D. C.

We, Citizens of Swain County, North Carolina, respectfully petition the Board of Tennessee Valley Authority to give careful consideration to conditions existing in the County with respect to Federal ownership of land within the County.

Recent newspaper articles record the purchase of two tracts of land in the area known as the Fontana Reservoir, whereas these purchases are in Graham County they do, in the opinion of the citizens of Swain County, effect the future welfare of Swain County; because of the fact that the greater part of the Fontana Reservoir lies in Swain County.

For many years the Nantahala Power and Light Company and its predecessors in title have provided very substantial tax revenues for Swain County and employment for its citizens.

The Companies have, in our opinion, conscientiously proceeded with the acquisition of lands needed for their development, paid fair and in some instances liberal amounts for the land purchased and have not to date exercised the right of Eminent Domain in Swain County.

At the present time only one-half of one of the three developed projects of these companies lies in Swain County.

We understand it is the intention of the Nantahala Power and Light Company to continue the acquisition of property and proceed with the development of its undeveloped properties as market conditions warrant. The citizens of Swain County look with favor upon increasing investments by this Company.

The solution of the difficult financial situation Swain County finds itself in, is, we firmly believe, depend upon the amount of

Over 2,000 Swain County citizens signed a petition in favor of Nantahala Power being the company which would build Fontana Dam.

NORTH CAROLINA, :
: A F F I D A V I T .
SWAIN COUNTY. :
:

This is to certify that the foregoing 24 pages of petition and signatures thereto is a true and accurate copy of the original petition signed in pen or pencil.

Jack Coburn
Affiant

Sworn and subscribed to,
This the 10 day of November, 1934.

Kelly Bennett

The petition papers come from the extensive Nantahala Power and Light special collection at WCU. Jack Coburn clearly had a leadership role in promoting the petition, as did Kelly Bennett. It is reasonable to suspect that Stanley Black was heavily involved behind the scenes, since he acted as attorney for Alcoa/Nantahala Power in the land acquisition. In effect, he was almost certainly more than just the attorney who took care of deed preparation, and acted as an agent for the company; that helps explain the phraseology of "fair and in some instances liberal amounts for the land purchased."

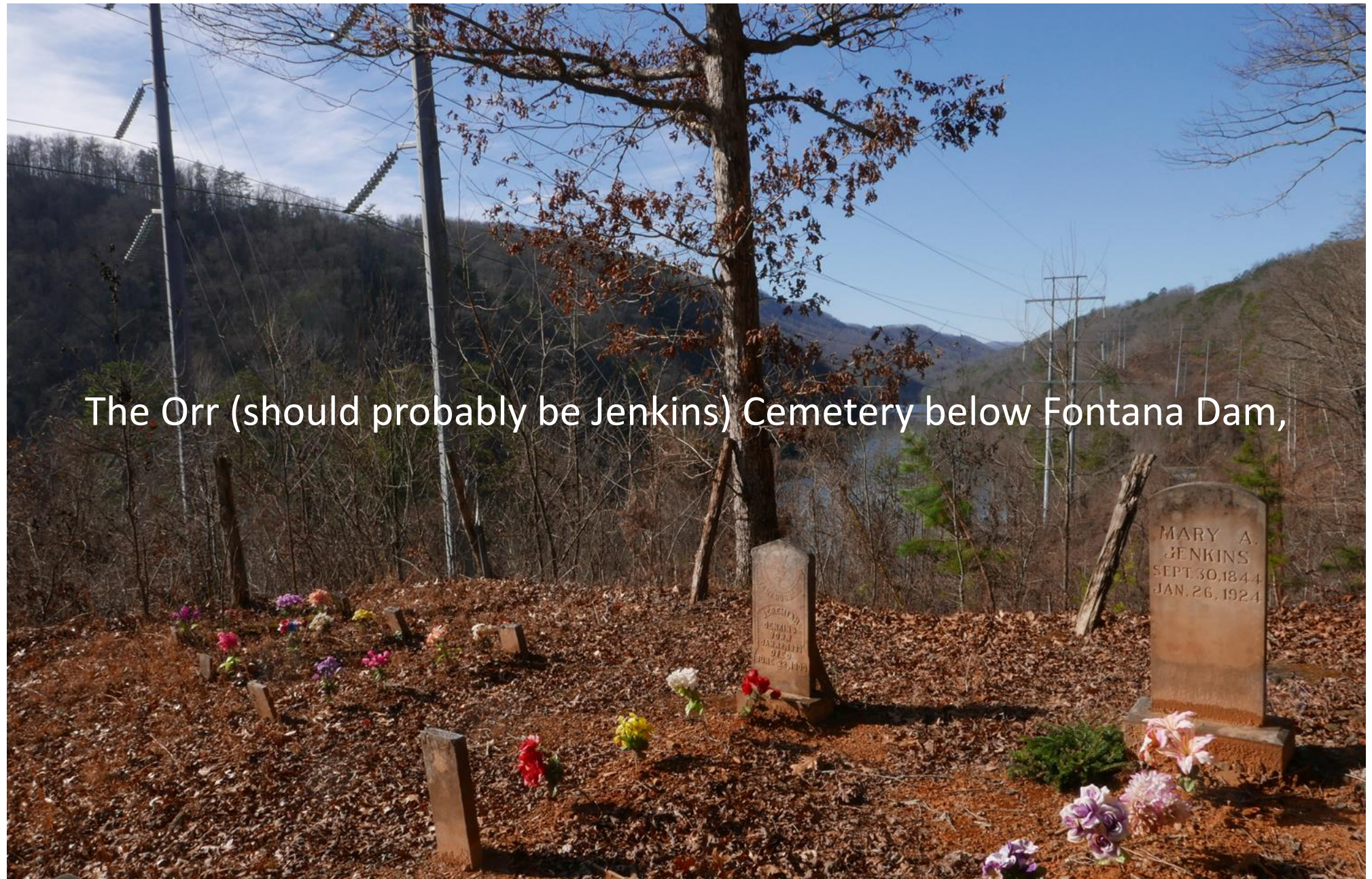
Thirty three of the first seventy five petitioners are buried in the BC Cemetery

1. E. H. Corpening, Chairman Board of Commissioners
2. A. S. Queen, Commissioner
3. P. P. DeHart, Commissioner
4. T. D. Bryson, Jr, Mayor, Town of Bryson City, N. C.
5. McKinley Edwards, Chairman Board of Aldermen
6. J. E. Coburn, Alderman
7. W. O. Calhoun, Alderman
8. V. A. Browning, Clerk of Court
9. Frank Hyatt, Register of Deeds
10. W. M. Hughes, County Accountant
11. C. F. Carroll, Jr. Supt. Public Instruction
12. S. W. Black, Chairman of School Board
13. J. H. Seay, Sheriff of Swain County
14. Mrs. Exie Wilson,
15. G. H. Martin
16. Kelly E. Bennett
17. G. W. Edwards
18. Aileen Jackson
19. W. C. Morgan
20. Mrs. W. T. Hyams
21. Frank B. Duncan
22. E. B. Gibbs, Engineer
23. J. A. Wayman
24. F. F. Merrill
25. E. T. Welch, Cashier Bryson City Bank

26. E. B. Whitaker, Atty., Bryson City, N. C.
27. J. A. McClannahan
28. N. H. Raxter
29. J. W. Moore
30. Irwin Hughes
31. T. A. Marr
32. F. H. Warren
33. Ora H. Daughtery
34. A. H. Hughes
35. Mrs. A. H. Hughes
36. Mrs. Leslie Brooks
37. W. T. Martin
38. C. J. Woodard
39. G. C. Ward
40. D. R. Bryson, M. D.
41. Annie D. Bryson
42. Pauline Kindley
43. T. W. Kindley
44. C. A. Campbell
45. Percy Grant
46. Solomon Maloof
47. H. D. Sneed
48. J. M. Bird
49. A. J. Franklin, Sr.
50. Edith Bryson Franklin
51. R. N. Shuler
52. W. E. Shuler
53. C. C. Gossett
54. L. L. Voigt
55. Nora Lee Voigt
56. O. P. Williams
57. Mrs. Jane Williams
58. W. H. Franklin
59. W. F. Weeks
60. C. H. Meadows, U. S. Commiss.
61. H. P. Meadows
62. Mrs. W. C. Morgan
63. Slayden Fakes & Co.
64. J. L. Orr
65. L. A. Enloe
66. L. B. Cooper
67. J. E. Shuler
68. C. E. Welch
69. L. J. Turpin
70. G. J. Wilson
71. S. A. DeHart
72. D. E. Nichols
73. Horace DeHart
74. Jack DeHart
75. I. S. Crawford, Attorney

All of those who are underlined take their rest in the Bryson City Cemetery.

High voltage transmission lines carrying low cost energy generated at Fontana in Graham and Swain Counties, NC west to Tennessee.



The Orr (should probably be Jenkins) Cemetery below Fontana Dam,

The first marked grave in the Orr Cemetery is that of Jeremiah Jenkins, a Civil War veteran who died in 1900. He was buried on land he had owned; his home stood below the cemetery, near where NC 28 now passes. A newspaper writer using the pen name Bud Wuntz talked about Jerry Jenkins in articles published in the Raleigh Morning Post on July 29, 1900. The actual name of "Bud Wuntz" was John Preston Arthur, author of *Western North Carolina: A History*.

Looking back on electricity supply for Bryson City: The town's first electric power came from a water- powered generator on Deep Creek



The boulder on the left anchored the dam on the west side of Deep Creek. The dam is about a tenth of a mile above the first bridge on the Deep Creek Trail. The boulder is fairly obvious from the trail. Just below the trail (east side of the creek), a cutout in the bank marks the location of the powerhouse, seen at right above. The dam backed water up to about the mouth of Indian Creek.



Photos courtesy of Jim Estes

Marion Eppley (1883 - 1960)

Marion Eppley was a physical chemist who studied at Princeton where he received the PhD. He served the Navy as a Lt. Commander during WW I and Captain during WW II, when he was the personal representative of Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz. He received the Legion of Merit for his service.

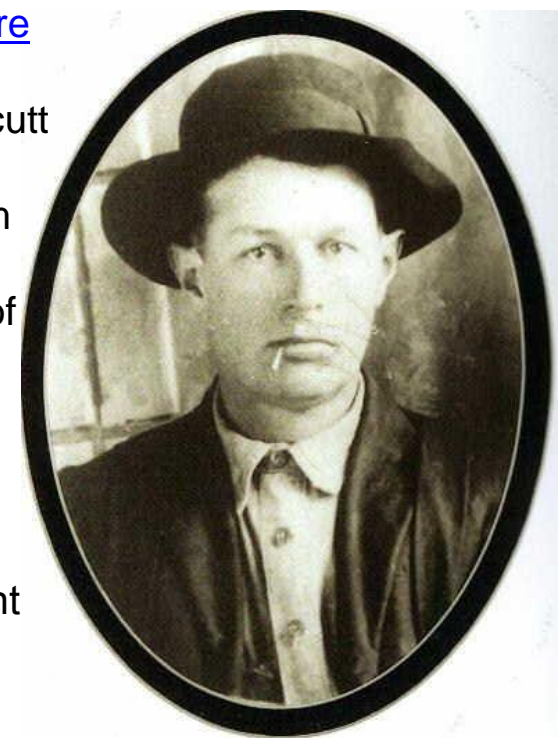
He established [Eppley Laboratory](#) in 1917; today it manufactures precision solar radiation measurement devices.

His endowment in [The Eppley Foundation for Research](#) still funds projects in pure and applied sciences. He left an 1100 acre tract in West Kingston, RI to the Audubon Society, a location where he once hunted with bow.

Eppley acquired 127 acres of land on Deep Creek, mostly on Hammer Branch, between 1911 and 1913. Included was over ¼ mile of Deep Creek trout water. When Bryson City impounded the waters for its power dam, a significant portion of Eppley's trout water was flooded. He sued the town and was awarded \$150 for loss of trout waters (and flooded streamside land).

Eppley and his wife Ethelberta were guided on local hunting and fishing outings by Sam Hunnicutt, whose family lived in a home owned by Eppley at the mouth of Hammer Branch. It was Eppley who encouraged Sam to write *20 Years Hunting and Fishing in the Great Smoky Mountains*, which included a number of folks now buried in the Bryson City Cemetery. They are discussed [here](#) and [here](#).

In the Introductory of *20 Years Hunting and Fishing in the Great Smoky Mountains*, Sam Hunnicutt notes that it was encouragement from Martin (sic) Eppley, who enjoyed Sam's hunting and fishing tales which led him to write the book. Other than noting that he was from New York City, what Sam had to say about Eppley was similar to what he said about anyone else involved in outings – from preachers to politicians, from pillars of the community to reprobates, from city slickers to the likes of Smoky Mountain icon Mark Cathey. Sam's outlook with regards to the great outdoors was the epitome of egalitarian. In a series of exchanges between Eppley and the NC Park Commission (NCPC) regarding the taking of his property, Eppley directed the NCPC to discuss what he understood to be valuable mineral content on the property with Sam Hunnicutt. Internal NCPC correspondence on the matter included a note from WH Woodbury, purchasing agent, to Verne Rhoades, executive secretary saying that he had been unable to locate Sam, noting "At the present time Sam Hunnicutt is dodging the sheriff."



In addition to their Long Island cottage, the Eppleys had a cabin at Beacon Rock, Rhode Island



From Robert Yarnall Richie Photograph Collection, DeGolyer Library, SMU

In 1924 Bryson City authorized the sale of bonds for purpose of erecting a power generating dam at Ela

- In the fall of 1923, Bryson City citizens had voted* “overwhelmingly” to sell \$100,000 in bonds to subsidize construction.
- Leaders in the effort included
 - [Kelly Bennett](#) (mayor)
 - [Jack Coburn](#)
 - [Thurman Leatherwood](#)
 - [Alec Elmore](#)
- The dam was providing electric power to Bryson City by 1925.

} All in Bryson City Cemetery

Back of Beyond, a biography of Horace Kephart by George Ellison and Janet McCue, portrayed the dam’s installation and other Bryson City infrastructure improvements as being a consequence of Kephart’s role in his abbreviated position as Chairman of the Board of Aldermen – a message which Kephart himself apparently conveyed. While the dam did, in fact, begin generating power during Kephart’s brief tenure (he did not complete a full term), it was a result of earlier efforts of those noted here. The book also used Kephart’s words: “there is a conservative element that did not want these improvements, and naturally, the dislike me.” Other infrastructure elements, including water and wastewater systems, though crude, were already in place well before his tenure. The fact that the community “overwhelmingly” approved the Ela dam bond issue directly contradicts of the *Back of Beyond* narrative, and clearly indicates a community which strongly supported progress.

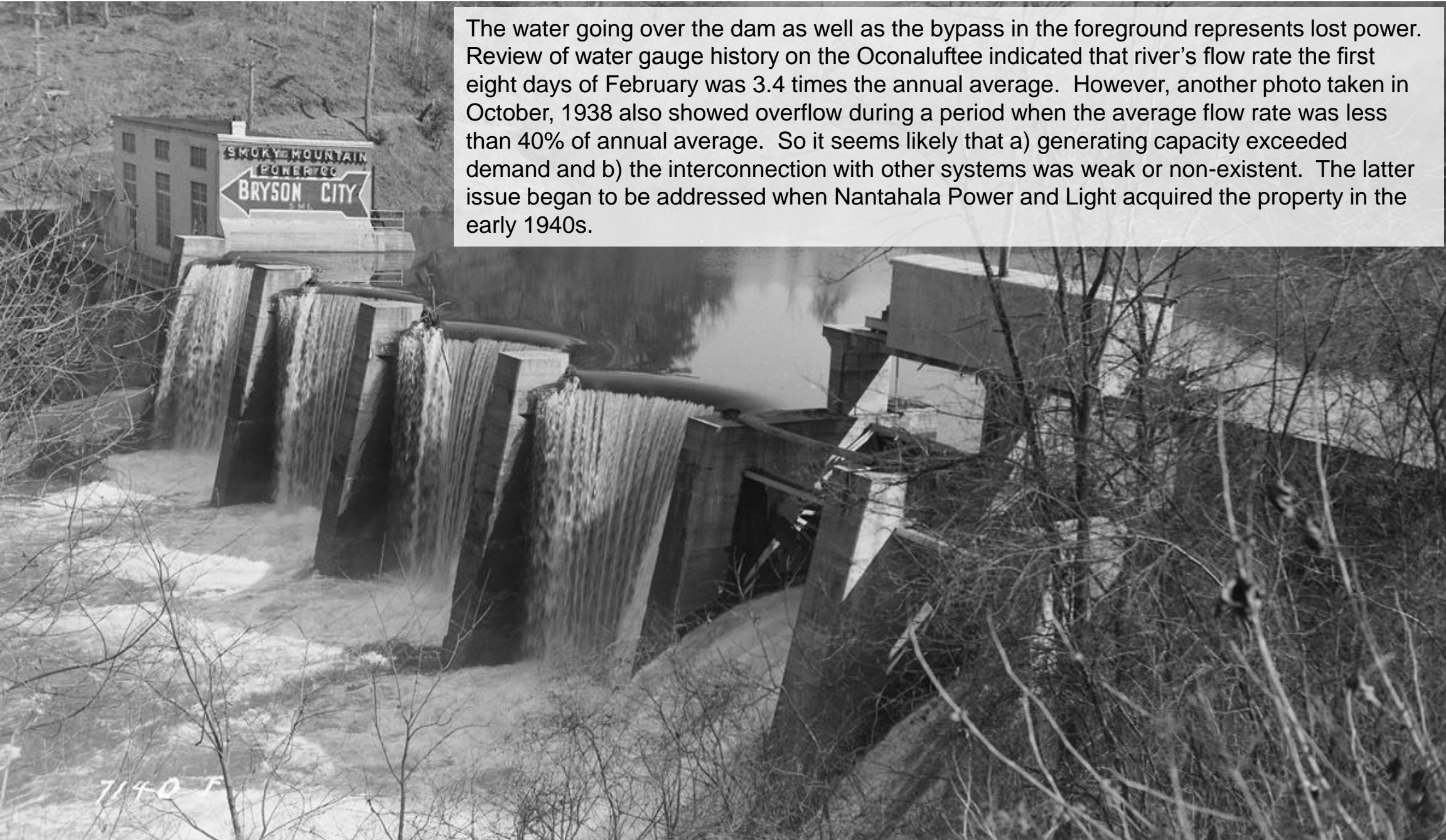
* June 15, 1924 Asheville Citizen



Group gathered at the Ela dam to celebrate the commissioning of a second generator, Jan 2, 1930; photographer unknown. **1: A.M. Bennett, 2: Ed Bryson, 3: S.W. Black, 4: Jack Coburn, 5: J.B. McCrary, 6: H.H. White, 7: Kelly Bennett, 8: Anne Bryson, 10: Orson Burlingame, 11: J. A. McCrary, 12: E.L. McKee, 13: Gertrude Dills McKee, 14: R.L. Snelson, 15: R.L. Sandidge, Jr,* 16: Harry Ditmore, 19: D.R. Bryson, 20: C.G. Dugas, 21: Clarence Angel.** Those in red are either buried or have cenotaphs in the Bryson City Cemetery. Take particular note of the appearance of Jack Coburn (#4, first row). Another photo including Jack Coburn which was taken by Kelly Bennett (#7, second row) will be shown later. Gertrude Dills McKee of Jackson County (Dillsboro was named for her father and town founder, William Allen Dills) was the first woman elected to the NC State Senate. Her mother, Alice Minerva Enloe, was a great granddaughter of early Oconaluftee settler, Abraham Enloe. Dr. Dan Bryson (#19, back row) was the son of Bryson City's namesake, Thaddeus Dillard Bryson. A photo of the Bryson Place, also taken by Kelly Bennett, will be shown later.

* Uncertain about R.L. Sandidge, Jr ID.

After operating for several years on a single turbine-generator, the second unit was added to the Ela Dam in 1930, and the system operation was leased to Smoky Mountain Power Company



The water going over the dam as well as the bypass in the foreground represents lost power. Review of water gauge history on the Oconaluftee indicated that river's flow rate the first eight days of February was 3.4 times the annual average. However, another photo taken in October, 1938 also showed overflow during a period when the average flow rate was less than 40% of annual average. So it seems likely that a) generating capacity exceeded demand and b) the interconnection with other systems was weak or non-existent. The latter issue began to be addressed when Nantahala Power and Light acquired the property in the early 1940s.

Men gathered next to the Smoky Mountain Power Company office in Bryson City in search of a CCC job



Great Smoky Mt Nat'l Park
NC Headquarters in 1933

The men were gathered at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park North Carolina office, which was in the single story building to the right of the one which housed Smoky Mountain Power Company. The Smoky Mountain Power Company building was owned by Stanley and Marianna Black at the time. They had acquired both the home which still stands (to the left, out of the photo frame) and the store building in 1924 and 1926, and rented the structures until selling to Charles and Annie Branton in 1945.

GRSM13608, 1933; Looking southwest from the Bryson City town square.

Approximately the same view from the square today



After buying the property from Stanley and Marianna Black in 1945, [Charlie](#) & [Annie Branton](#) had the single story portion of the building erected by in 1949, per terms of a lease with the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company. The date of construction of the two story portion is not known (to me). In 1955, the ground floor portion was home to Mashburn's Grill; later it was Deep Creek Grill, operated by Ray Wright. Dr. Harold Bacon had an office upstairs – dates of occupancy unknown; Annie Grant was his nurse. Prior to this, Dr. Bacon had an office in the basement of the Community Building, on the other side of Everett (now Rector) Street.

In 1958, the partition wall between the buildings was removed, per a lease renewal with A&P. In 1963, the Brantons agreed to allow the VFW post install six bowling lanes. The bowling alley, complete with several pinball machines operated for several years. The building has since been host to a number of businesses, including a florist and the current Cornerstone Café & Grill.

The town lots which these buildings occupy have a broad connection to folks the Bryson City Cemetery. This includes the Brantons, Stanley and Marianna Black, who sold part of the property to them, John, Nannie, Lula, Ralph, and Harry Ditmore, Samuel Conley, R.G. Coffey and Alec Elmore. All owned part or all of the property at one time.

A view from above the Park office, 1935

I believe this to be the oldest building in town



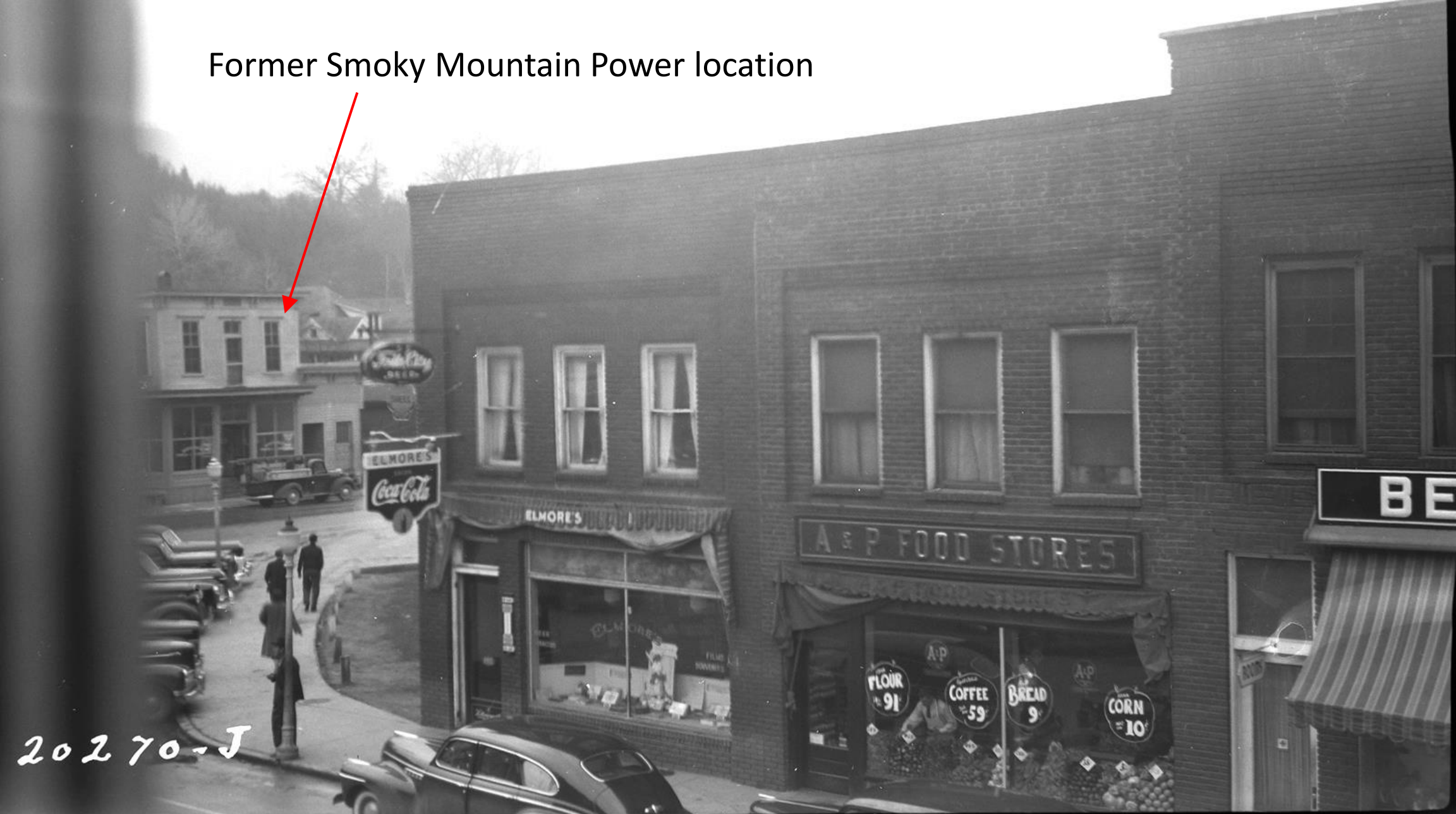
Original town lot 3 included the area bordered by Main Street on the south, the town square on the southeast (the trees in the photo and the water fountain being used as a seat near the front of Hyams' Drug Company are all part of the town square), Everett Street on the east and the river on the north. Interestingly, lot 3 was originally deeded from Martin DeHart, Chairman of the County Commissioners to W.A. and Alice Dills in 1877. These were the parents of Gertrude Dills McKee, noted in the photo taken at the dedication of a second generator at the Ela Dam. The Dills paid \$200 for the lot, apparently did nothing with it, and sold it to W.A. Enloe and A.B. Allison in 1883 for \$135. In 1885, Enloe and Allison sold a 44 x 60 ft strip along Everett Street to I.B. Conley. It was I.B. and Ida Conley who had the brick building which still stands on the lot constructed in the 1885-1886 period. The Shell station was operated by R.P. Brown, who was driving the car when Horace Kephart and Fiswoode Tarleton were killed. See the story told by Rollins Justice about Brown and a Saturday night shooting on slide 34.

In 1885, [I.B. Conley](#) purchased a 44x60 ft strip adjoining the town square along Gushing Lane (now Everett Street), a portion of original town lot 3. A year later, he and his wife, [Ida Franks Conley](#), sold a 60 x 22 ft section on Gushing Lane to I.B.'s father, [Samuel Conley](#). The latter deed noted that the deeded property was "lying north of the brick store house and runs with said brick house back the space of 60 ft towards A.B. Allison's dwelling house, thence towards the river 22 ft wide from the NW corner of said brick house...."



Photo from Sara Hyams Robinson – inside of Elmore Building where Ted Hyams had a Drug Store. That is Ted, 2nd from the left, Freda White 3rd from right and Kenneth Sandlin 2nd from right. In addition to the drug store operation in the Elmore building, the Hyams had a gift shop which Freda White's daughter, FBCC member Fran Talley (who identified her mother here) remembers. It was apparently at the location which was later Roper's (between the DK Collins Building and Sneed's Restaurant). Kenneth Sandlin was identified by his niece, Betty Sandlin. We'd love to hear possible identification of the others.

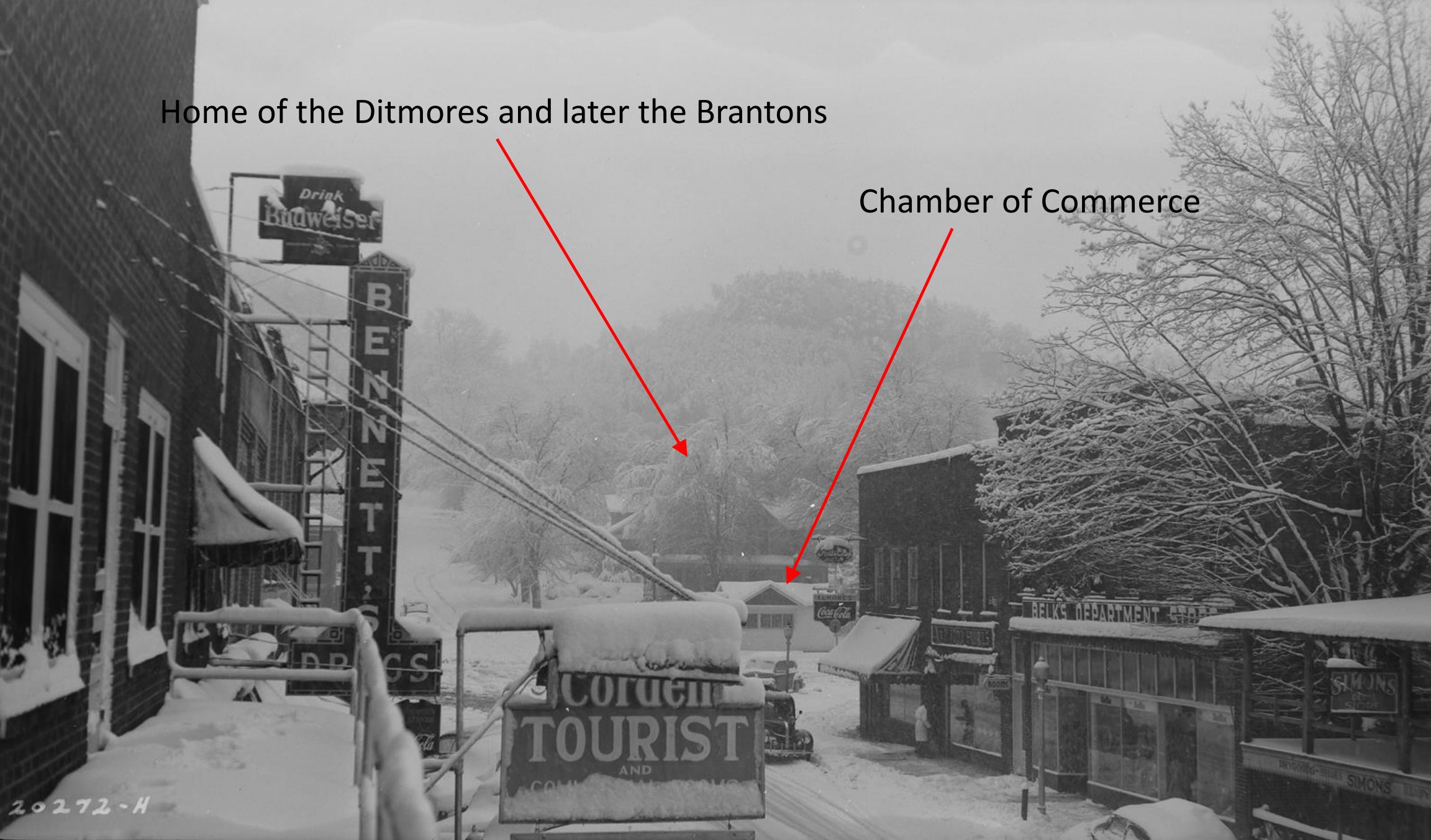
Former Smoky Mountain Power location



TVA photo 20270J, taken in late 1942 from the upstairs of a building on Everett Street (probably around Fred Moody's law office). There are many connections to the BC Cemetery here. The Elmore store building had been previously owned by [L. Lee Marr](#) & wife [Mattie Gibson Marr](#) and [Jack Coburn](#) & wife [Bland Wiggins Coburn](#). They sold it to [Alec Elmore](#) and his wife, [Minnie Welch Elmore](#) in 1923. The Elmores also owned the building housed by A&P. The Belks building was owned and operated at this time by [John Hill Coffey](#) & wife [Dessie Cunningham Coffey](#). They had acquired it from [McKinley](#) and [Annie Edwards](#). Other previous owners included [Lewellyn J Moody](#) and [Stanley](#) and [Marianna Black](#). A&P operated out of the store at middle right up until it moved into the new structure erected by the Brantons. After A&P left, Western Auto, operated by Leo Suggs, took over the storefront. Suggs, and subsequently the Livingston family, operated Western Auto in the building until moving to the new location on the north side of the river along Shope Street after the Bear Ford bridge was constructed in the late 1960s.

Home of the Ditmores and later the Brantons

Chamber of Commerce



TVA photo 20272H, a view from a bit north of the previous photo. Cordell Hotel and store were operated by [Robert Cordell](#) & wife [Lillian Phillips Cordell](#), grandmother of FBCC member Sara Robinson. Bennett's Drug Store, now owned by FBCC member Ivan Gibby, was operated at this time by [Kelly Bennett](#) and his daughter [Mary Alice Greyer](#). This was during a period when Swain was a wet county. The store at the far right is Simons Department Store. Conley Drug Store, managed by [Glenn Conley](#), is just out of the photo to the right.

TVA Photo 7140E: Looking east to the Bryson City town square February, 1939



A few Bryson City Cemetery connections in this photo:

- [William F](#) and [Eliza Cooper](#) , [Jennie Cooper Angel](#)
- [T.I. Hughes](#)
- [D.K. Collins](#) & family
- [R.L. Snelson](#) and [Decie Snelson](#)

[Horace Kephart](#)
[Max C.](#) & [Lois Close](#)
[Stanley](#) & [Marianna Black](#)
[John H.](#) & [Nannie Ditmore](#)



The Shell station located on the square in 1935 was operated by R.P. Brown, who was driving the vehicle when Horace Kephart and Fiswoode Tarleton were killed in the wreck near the mouth of Cooper Creek. Rollins Justice, a 1928 Bryson City High School graduate who married classmate Evelyn Carter, told the following story in the Spring, 1991 North Shore Historical Association publication:

In the late 1920's, a man named Brown had a gasoline service station on the southwest corner of the square in Bryson City. If Brown had a first name, or initials, we never learned them. He had gained the distinction of being a survivor of the automobile wreck in which the writer Horace Kephart was killed. Brown had suffered severe head injuries, but became able to work and manage his service station. It was said he had a metal plate in his skull to repair the wreck damage.*

I don't remember what, at the time of his business there, was in the main part of the frame building which stood on the corner by the brick building still standing, which was then T.I. Hughes' store, and is now a hardware store. Brown's building had served many purposes, at one time housing bakery, operated by Jim Driver, a Cherokee. Brown's working space was a long narrow room, sort of a lean-to to the main building, possibly eight feet wide, and the full length of the building. His work table, with a radio on it, was at the back end of the room.

Along the sides of the room were long benches on which the boys and men of the town gathered in the evenings, specially on Saturdays, to loafer, smoke, swap yarns, and listen to the radio.

Late one Saturday, the room crowded, the radio going full blast, there could barely be heard the sound of a horn at the gasoline pump. Brown rose from his seat at the work table, stumbled over several feet attached to the loafers, and got outside to serve the customer.

A few minutes later, Brown was back in the door, standing quietly before the long, obstructed way back to his desk. As he started the walk, he reached under his jacket and hauled out a heavy revolver. Moving slowly, at each step he fired into the center line of the hall-like floor.

BLAM – BLAM – BLAM – BLAM – BLAM; five shots into the floor between the rapidly drawn back feet; the sixth shot completely shattered the radio.

In the quiet room, the loafers rose silently, one by one, and filed quickly out the door.

* It is actually the northwest corner of the square

Approximately the same eastward view today



In addition to the newer buildings, other changes include:

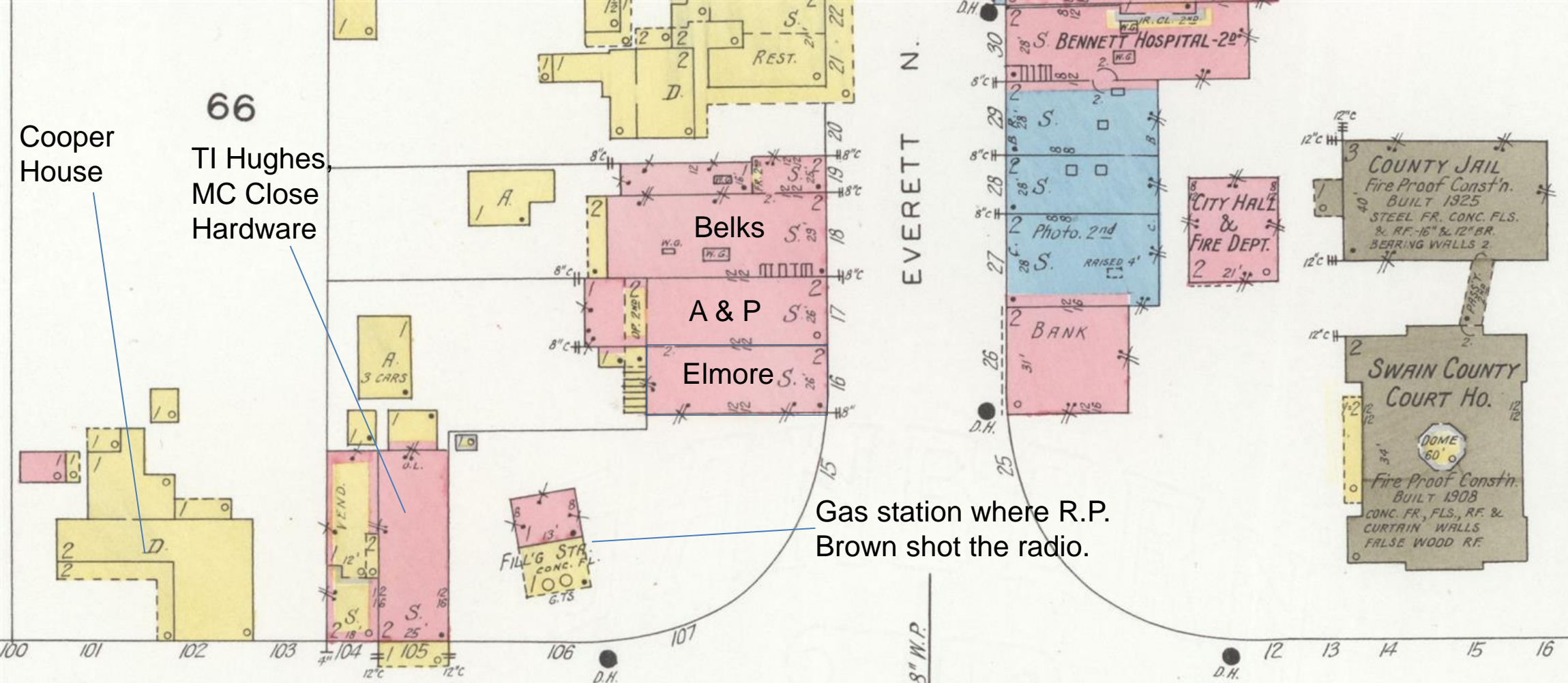
- No chimneys
- Chamber of Commerce near former DK Collins building (Bryson Theater)
- No functioning gas stations on Main Street

Some things don't change – the sign for a Unplugged Pub has replaced the one for Kephart Tavern

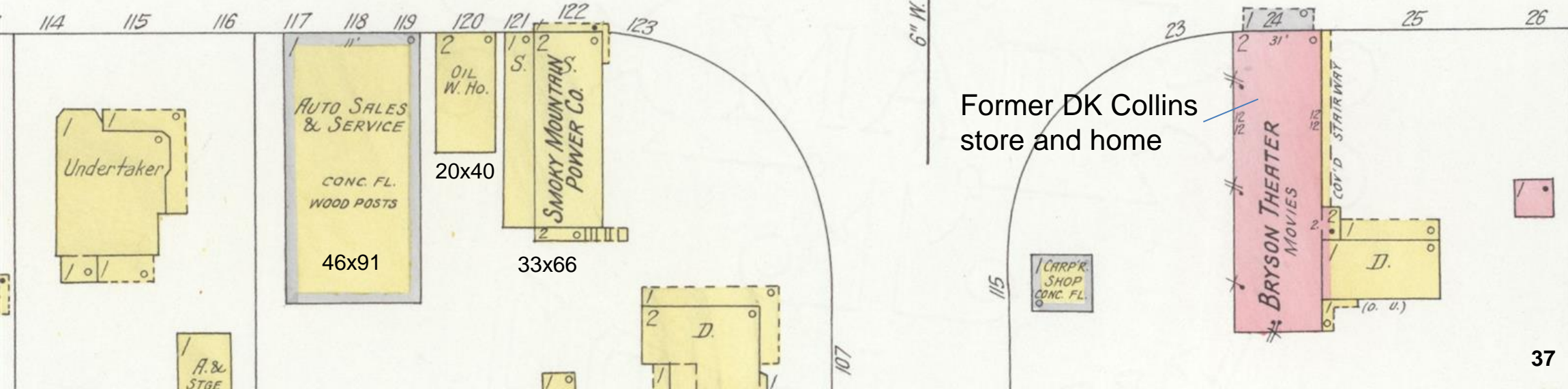


Kephart Tavern & Restaurant was run by Petey Angel, son of [Jennie Cooper Angel](#). The bottom of the sign reads: "Fried Chicken – Beer – Curb Service."

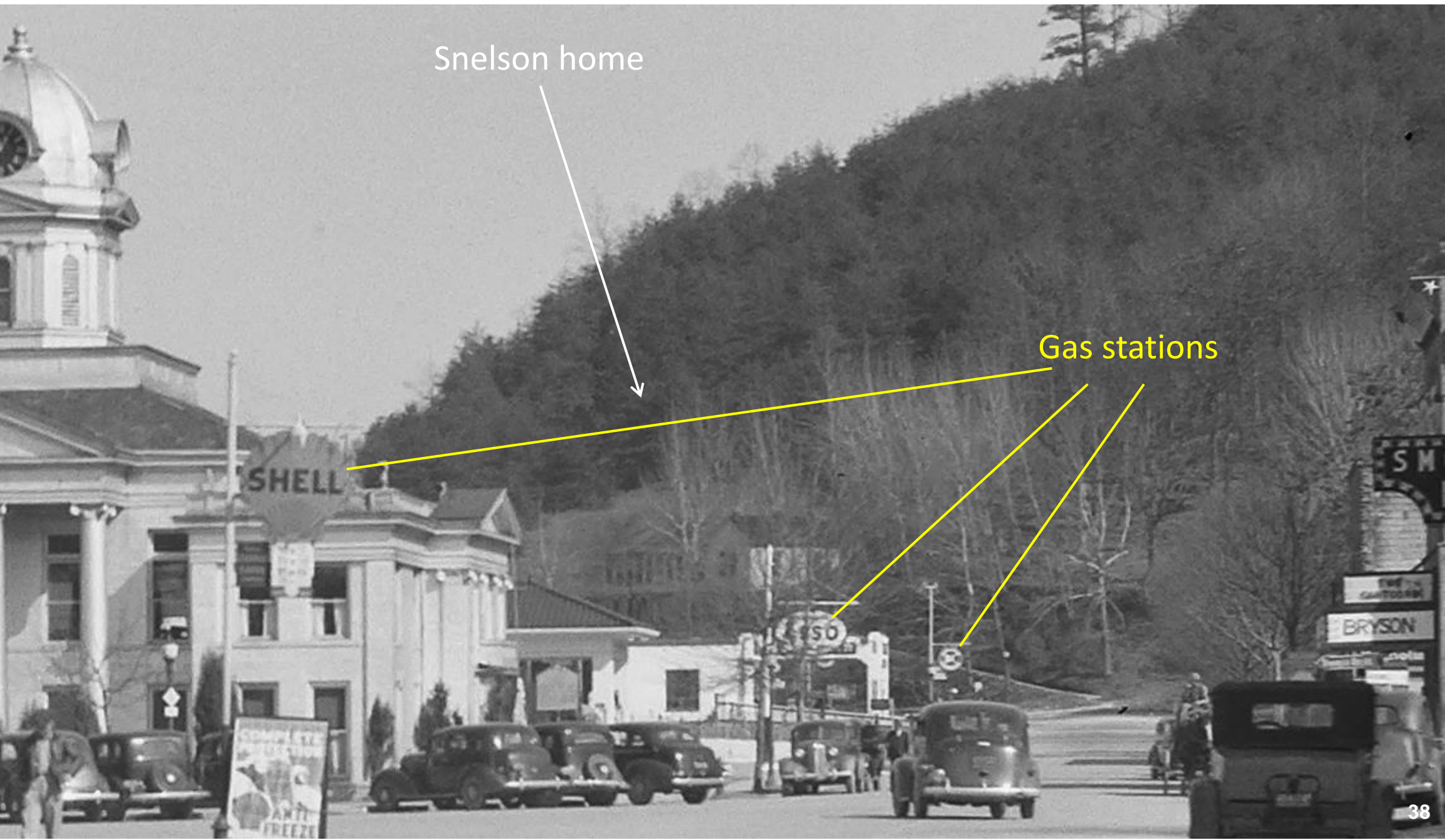
The [M.C. Close](#) Hardware store and adjacent brick building were still owned by [T.I. Hughes](#) when this photo was taken. The Closes rented the building from Hughes starting in the mid-30s, with [Lois Brooks Close](#) retiring in 1963 at age 79. Monte and Diana Clampitt purchased the property in 1995.



This is part of a set of maps created by the Sanborn Map Company in 1937. The map's purpose was to document the water lines and types of buildings for fire protection and insurance considerations. Some of the locations seen in previous photos are noted.



The [Decie](#) and [R.L. Snelson](#) house behind trees to the right of the courthouse stood across from where the IGA is now. There were three gas stations within 300 yards along Main Street (and others to the rear of the photographer). The [DK Collins](#) building was serving as the Bryson Theater. Note the partially hidden horse drawn wagon at right.



Snelson home

Gas stations



Smoky Mountain Power Company occupied the building on the southwest side of the square owned by [Stanley](#) and [Marianna Black](#), with the Great Smoky Mountains National Park North Carolina Office using an adjacent space.

Do you remember the Fryemont Inn sign (mostly hidden here) which stood on the south side of the square?

The BRYSON sign was for the Bryson Theater, located in the [DK Collins](#) building.

Showing at the Bryson Theater: ad from the Thursday, Feb 5, 1942 Bryson City Times

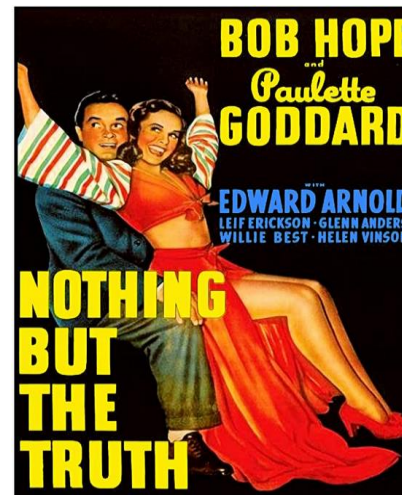
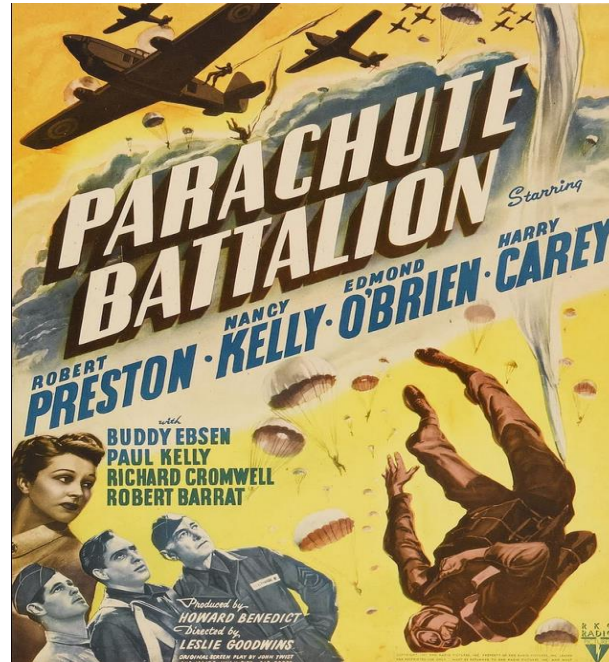
BRYSON THEATRE
A GOOD SHOW EVERY NIGHT

Saturday, February 7
CYCLONE on HORSEBACK
— with —
Tim Holt

Monday - Tuesday, Feb. 9-10
PARACHUTE BATTALION
— with —
Robert Preston-Nancy Kelly

Wednesday, Feb. 11
SIGNS OF THE WOLF
— with —
Grace Bradley - M. Whalen

Thursday-Friday, Feb. 12-13
NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH
— with —
Bob Hope and P. Goddard



The Tim Holt western showed on February 7, exactly two months after the "Date which will live in infamy."

Tim Holt was in the Army Air Corps during WW II and received the Purple Heart for injuries suffered on the last day of the war. Ray Whitley served in the Navy on the heels of WW I and entertained troops during WW II. He wrote several western songs, including "Back in the Saddle Again"

Robert Preston and Edmund O'Brien both served in the Army Air Force.

Harry Carey served in the Navy as a Pharmacist Mate 2nd class.

Michael Whalen (Sign of the Wolf) served in the Navy.

Buddy Ebsen, who later played Jed Clampett, served in the Coast Guard during WW II.

Bob Hope, at age 38, did not serve, but his support of the military from WW II to the Persian Gulf led to his being named an honorary veteran of the U.S. military in 1997.

In 1941, Nantahala Power purchased Ela Dam and the existing transmission and distribution system; a year later they moved their office from “the Black building” on the square to the former post office building on Everett Street

Power Holdings At Bryson City Bought By Nantahala Firm

BRYSON CITY, July 18. (Special)—The State Utilities commission, Raleigh, announced Friday that it has granted permission to the Nantahala Power and Light company, of Franklin, a subsidiary of the Aluminum company of America, to purchase the holdings of the Smoky Mountains Power company.

Chief Clerk R. O. Self at Raleigh said the Smoky Mountains company's chief business is to supply electric current for Bryson City under a lease through which it operates the town's generating plant.

Acquisition of the lease, Mr. Self said, has been approved by Bryson City's municipal government.

It was stated that the Nantahala company, of which J. E. S. Thorpe

is president, will assume charge of the holdings on September 1. The holdings consist of the generating plant on Oconaluftee river, five miles east of Bryson City, and the distribution system.

A case pending in Superior court here, entitled the town of Bryson City versus the Smoky Mountains Power company, is scheduled to be heard at the term opening here next Monday. Judge William A. Bobbitt, of Charlotte, will preside.

The town of Bryson City leased the power plant to the Smoky Mountains Power company, owned by J. B. and J. A. McCrary, of Atlanta. S. S. Allred is manager of the plant and Henry Truett is office manager. The company had operated the plant for 12 years.

POWER COMPANY MOVES OFFICES AT BRYSON CITY

BRYSON CITY, June 1. (Special)—The Nantahala Power and Light company has moved its local office from the Black building on the Square to the building on Everett street formerly occupied by the post office.

The office building has been renovated by the owners, Edwards and Leatherwood, to meet the needs of the company.

The company is making many improvements in the system since it bought the lease of the Smoky Mountain Power company. New poles are being erected and much work has been done at the plant on Oconaluftee river. A power line has been run here from Webster, connecting this plant with other plants in this section.



TVA Photo 12513E, August 30 1940, when [Thurman](#) and [Nell Leatherwood](#) and [McKinley](#) and [Annie Edwards](#) owned the building which housed the Bryson City Post Office. This would become the office of Nantahala Power and Light within two years. FBCC member Bryan Jackson believes that the boy holding the stick to indicate the high water mark may be his father, Walter Coburn Jackson. Walt was born in 1928 and was named for his Uncle Jack Coburn. When the Post Office moved, it was to another building which was erected under the ownership of the Leatherwoods and Edwards – the current Jimmy Mac’s. In 1956, the couples exchanged shared ownership, with the above single story building going to the Edwards and the Jimmy Mac’s building to the Leatherwoods.

The post office’s first location in Bryson City was in D.K. Collins’ store on the southeastern corner of the square. After the move from this location, the post office remained at the Jimmy Mac’s location until 1964, when it moved to the brand new Federal Building on west Main Street. The Commodore and Anna Lou Casada family had P.O. Box 204 at both locations. The lock combination was B-E-B at both locations. Our phone number was 2711; none of the seven digit stuff until the late 1960s.



This is what I recall the mailboxes in what is now Jimmy Mac's looked like, although I think the gnurled knob and pointer and the latch were also bronze. The ones at the Federal Building had a similar gnurled nob and pointer, but it doesn't seem to me that there was any brass on them. Combination locks gave way to soulless key operated locks at the current PO. 43



TVA Photo 12513D, August 30 1940. The post office was just north of the Swain Beauty Shop, which was housed in the Sisk Drug Store Building. The two story frame building just beyond the post office was the home and store space of Civil War veteran [J.M. Welch](#), his wife [Margaret Battle Welch](#), their son [Charlie Welch](#) and daughter [Minnie Welch Elmore](#) (wife of [Alec Elmore](#) whose store on the square was seen earlier). That property was purchased by the Edwards in 1945, and the building which is now Everett Street Diner was erected. The home beyond (with NEHI sign) was the former home of [Dr. Robert L. Davis](#), his wife [Lizzie Edwards Davis](#), and daughter [Cora Lee Davis Brown](#).

An later view (early 1949) courtesy of FBCC member Betty Sandlin

The Edwards owned the building which housed Swain Electric Company, owned by Max Anders. This is now Everett Street Diner.



By this time, Sisk Drug ownership had transferred to Solomon Maloof. Nantahala Power and Light was in the building formerly occupied by the Post Office (but still owned by Thurman and Nell Leatherwood and McKinley and Annie Edwards). Beyond stood an electric appliance shop and on beyond that was the location of Wiggins Market, operated by Neville, the father of FBCC member Talmage Wiggins. Beyond are two buildings which still stand – the Citizens Bank building at the corner of Everett and Bryson Streets and Slayden-Fakes just across the railroad tracks. The old road going up Black Hill rises steeply at the end of Everett Street. The home of Aunt Mag Williams can barely be seen. The brick building under construction on the right was erected for a clothing store by Betty Sandlin's parents. It later became a pool hall.



TVA Photo 12513G, August 30 1940. Citizens Bank building was occupied by the Bryson City Times. Next to it was the Fryemont Theater, which had been owned by attorney [Amos Frye](#), who also built the Fryemont Inn. Incorporators of Citizens Bank included [Amos Frye](#), [R.G. Coffey](#), [R.L. Sandidge](#), [S.V. Welch](#), [D.G. Fisher](#), [R.M. Thomasson](#) and [J.H. Dorsey](#). The boy holding the rod in the span between the brick column of what was then the Fryemont Theater and the Citizens Bank building has the rod positioned to indicate the maximum water level.



TVA photo 12515A, Bryson City Depot after the flood, with the boy at the right indicating the high water mark. Note the "COLORED" entrance.

*Tacky** (noun): gaudy, lacking taste. Synonyms: crass, boorish, crude, unrefined, ostentatious.



Same area as preceding slide, Feb 9, 2017. The two buildings on the right stand on town lot 11 (north side of the river). The lot was sold to John Everett in 1885 by [T.D.](#) and [Mary Bryson](#). It then was transferred to [A.M. Frye](#), Trustee of Swain County Bank in 1904. The bank trustees, including Frye, [J. Robert Long](#), [A.H. Elmore](#), [J.E. Coburn](#) and [S.W. Black](#) sold the building, including furnishings to [T.D. Bryson, Jr](#), [J.E. Coburn](#) and [S.W. Black](#) in 1909. From them, the two-story portion passed to C.T. Sisk in 1919, Solomon & Elizabeth Maloof in 1945, and then to Mildred Arvey in 1963 before being acquired by the present owners in 2002. The single story portion was owned at some point by over twenty individuals buried in the Bryson City Cemetery.

*The "Tacky" reference applies to a circumstance where an old building with a wonderful history is named by modern day owners for themselves.



[I.K. Stearns](#) photo from WCU Stearns-Grueninger collection. [Fannie Simpson Leatherwood](#), [John Everett](#)'s sister-in-law, with her oldest son, [Thurman](#). This is taken on Hospital Hill, looking east. Part of Lackey Hill is above Fannie's head. Fannie's twin sister, Anna Louise, was the wife of John Everett, who was mentioned previously in connection with Epps Spring.



Home of Jack and Bland Coburn on west Main Street. From R-L: [Jack Coburn](#), niece [Eleanor Wiggins Heyward](#), [Bland Wiggins Coburn](#), and Eleanor's mother, Estelle Wiggins, Martha Abernathy, friend of Estelle, and Nina Sharpe, Jack's sister. Photo courtesy of Bryan Jackson, Estelle's great-grandson and FBCC member. Eleanor, who appears to be four or five years old in the photo, was born in 1911, dating this photo to around 1915 - 1916.



Bryan Jackson, walking in the footsteps of his forebears (photo by Penny Jackson, also a FBCC member). Below: the Coburn house, seen from Jack and Bland's plot at the Bryson City Cemetery



From Frank Fry Collection at Western Carolina, donated by FBCC member Jean Douthit



Looking northeast from the Everett Street bridge in the early 1900s. The home of [Fannie Simpson](#) and [Robert Lee Leatherwood](#) stands atop Pine Hill (now Hospital Hill). The original First Baptist Church stands in the center. To the left of it, at the location of today's First Baptist Church, is the home of Fannie's twin sister [Anna Louise Simpson](#) and her husband [John Everett](#), with a Victorian spire. Steam is rising from the original location of Bryson City Pump Works which moved down the river and became [Carolina Wood Turning](#) in the 1920s. [Jeremiah Shank](#) was the company president originally; his grandson [I.K. Stearns](#) and daughter [Miss Jess Shank](#) also served terms as Company President.

Also from [Frank Fry](#) Collection

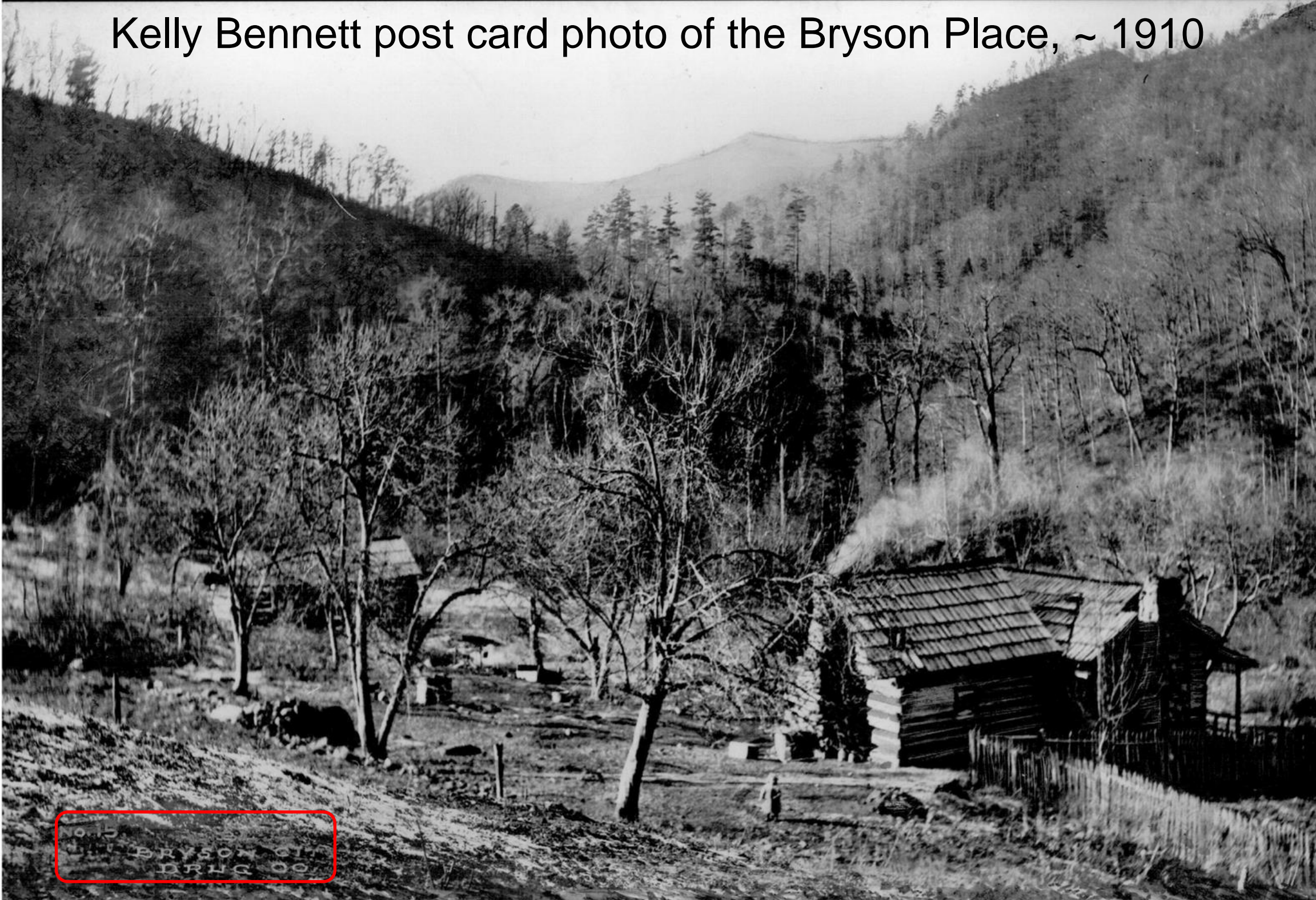


This is what the bridge looked like when [Frank Fry](#) took the previous photo. The building seen on the south side of the bridge was owned by [Charles](#) and [Dona Wilhide](#). [Horace Kephart](#)'s office was in the upstairs of this building.



This is a photograph taken by Doc [Kelly Bennett](#) of [Horace Kephart](#) (L) and [Jack Coburn](#). Based on their appearance compared with photos of known dates, my guess is that this was in the early 1920s. Kephart was born in 1862; Coburn was born in 1866, and looks considerably younger than he did in the photo at Ela Dam in 1930. Both died in automobile wrecks – Kephart at the mouth of Cooper Creek and Jack in the Nantahala Gorge. Coburn carried a cigar 365 days a year, but only smoked it once – on Christmas Day.

Kelly Bennett post card photo of the Bryson Place, ~ 1910



0.5 BRYSON CO DRUG CO

This photo appeared, uncredited, in *Our Southern Highlanders*. Note the little girl in the back yard, the mature fruit trees and the paling fence around the garden. T.D. Bryson acquired 1100 acres of land in 1878; 1000 acres at 33 1/3 cents/acre and 100 acres at \$1.50/acre. The Bryson family allowed the place to be used for decades as a community commons - a retreat and campsite.

A Plea

Please consider sharing photos of both people and places as a part of our efforts to promote and honor the wonderful history of our area.

While you might consider ultimately donating collections, as has been done in the case of the Frank Fry and Stearns-Grueninger Collections, for FBCC purposes, all that is needed is to allow us to borrow, scan, and return the photos, with a request that you provide help in annotating (when known) with data such as names, locations, dates, circumstances, and the like.

An example of why it is worth the effort

Thurston Adger Wilson and Adger, Jr. Photo from Stearns-Grueninger collection, taken by I.K. near his cabin on Noland Creek. After some effort, I was able to locate a daughter of T.A. Wilson, Lu Wilson Rose. She has shared the photo with the family, which had no idea that this photo of father and son (both now deceased) existed. They were, needless to say, delighted. T.A. Wilson was an early champion for industrial safety in North Carolina, a charter member and long term Chairman of the NC Industrial Commission, and a Director of Blue Cross Blue Shield for over three decades.

