

Medical professionals & healthcare workers in the Bryson City Cemetery (part 1 of X)

Don Casada, May 2019

Convention: Names in blue letters are buried in the BC Cemetery

Individuals identified with medical/health profession experience (sorted by date of death)

Name		Birth			Death		
First	Last	Year	Month	Day	Year	Month	Day
J.E.	West	1853	9	24	1881	3	19
E.M.	Scruggs	1829	9	8	1895	3	12
George W.	Ward	1803		0	1900		0
J.E.T.	Welch	1848	1	2	1921	4	12
R.L.	Davis	1855	1	18	1921	7	15
J.A.	Cooper	1847	10	20	1932	2	11
James	DeHart	1873	12	30	1932	10	18
A.M.	Bennett	1861	6	9	1941	1	20
Sue	Lee	1867	8	3	1946	6	1
D.R.	Bryson	1875	12	26	1955	12	22
Ophelia	Dorsey	1907	3	29	1967	10	5
Berlin	Thomasson	1897	10	22	1970	9	17
Kelly	Bennett	1890	2	8	1974	6	28
Harry	Ditmore	1902	1	6	1978	10	0
Bertie Beck	Sigmon	1888	8	31	1983	1	25
Glenn	Conley	1901	5	22	1988	5	27
Thomas Grady	Conley	1903	1	25	1988	7	3
William E.	Mitchell	1922	2	1	1998	6	7
Mary Alice Bennett	Greyer	1914	11	22	2001	9	12
Verayle	Franks	1908	5	18	2006	1	14
Deborah	McDonald-Welch	1951	7	13	2018	3	15

First, some rambling general notes

Branson's Business Directory physician listing for Swain County

- 1884
 - R.L. Davis, G.W. Reed, E.M. Scruggs, Charleston
 - L.M. Medlin, Wayside
 - John Mingus, Ocona Lufty
 - G.W. Ward, Nantahala
- 1889 & 1890
 - A.M. Bennett, R.L. Davis, E.M. Scruggs, Bryson City
 - G.M. Mossy, Whittier
 - G.W. Ward, Nantahala

First apparent effort at formal county organization was in 1917

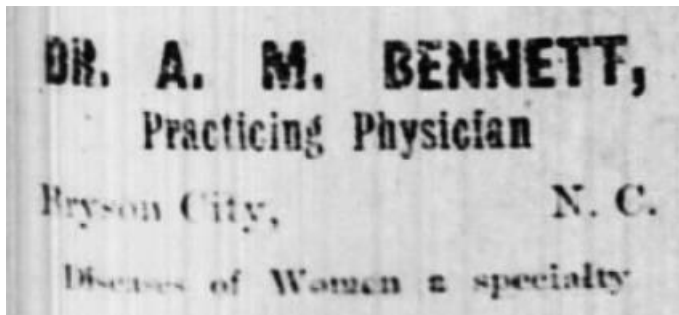
- In Transactions of the Medical Society of the State of NC, 64th annual meeting, held in Asheville in April, 1917, Dr. P.R. Bennett reported that:

“Drs. A.M. Bennett, P.R. Bennett, D.R. Bryson, James DeHart, J.L. Reeves and J.A Cooper met and organized a county medical society.....A.M. Bennett, President, James DeHart, Vice-President, J.L. Reeves, Secretary and Treasurer.”

Licensure was apparently an unsure thing, particularly around the turn of the 20th century

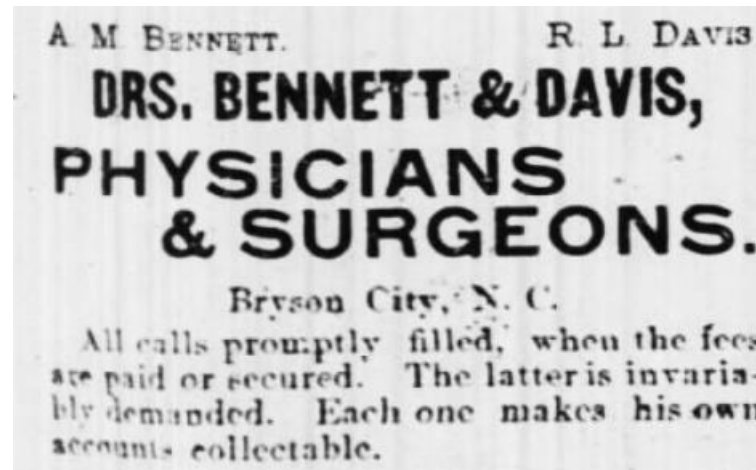
- Even though [E.M. Scruggs](#) was listed in Branson's Business Directory as a physician, it is doubtful that he was licensed.
- I was also unable to find evidence of licensure of William Bryson Cole (Forney area) [George Ward](#) (Judson) or [J.E.T. Welch](#) (Bushnell); however, Volume 99 (1921) of *Medical Record*, a weekly trade journal noted "Dr. J.E.T. Welch, a practitioner of Bushnell, NC and a Civil War veteran, died of heart failure on April 12 at the age of seventy-four years."
- In 1909, five Swain physicians were listed in the American Medical Dictionary: [J.A. Cooper](#) (Almond), [A.M. Bennett](#), [D.R. Bryson](#) and [R.L. Davis](#) (Bryson City), and James H. Teague (Whittier)
- Of the towns west of Waynesville, Robbinsville had the most licensed physicians (5); Murphy and Franklin had 3 each, Sylva and Andrews 2 each.

Local advertising



DR. A. M. BENNETT,
Practicing Physician
Bryson City, N. C.
Diseases of Women a specialty

July 10, 1890 Swain County Herald



A. M. BENNETT. R. L. DAVIS
DRS. BENNETT & DAVIS,
PHYSICIANS
& SURGEONS.
Bryson City, N. C.
All calls promptly filled, when the fees are paid or secured. The latter is invariably demanded. Each one makes his own accounts collectable.

August 15, 1889 Swain County Herald

Dr. James E. West
(1853-1881)

Dr. James E. West's untimely death

A STRANGE DREAM. Dr. J. E. West was drowned March 19, 1881, while attempting to ford the Tuckasegee river at the Bear Ford, and remained in the water about two weeks, when Rachel Grant, a poor woman whose son Dr. West had been treating, dreamed that he came to her and on seeing him she expressed surprise and told him she thought that he was drowned. He told her that he was and wanted to tell her where to direct the men, when they came to search, where to find his body. He said to tell them to get into the canoe and pole toward two maples on the opposite side and when they got near the current that came around a rock to put their pole down and they would find him. When she awoke in the morning she dressed and walked up to the landing to see if it looked like she had seen it while dreaming. She was so impressed that she sat and waited till the searching party came, to whom she told her story. Of course, some were amused while a few had faith enough to follow her directions, and when they did so found the body in the precise place she had pointed out to them. Mrs. Grant is still living in this county, as well as some of those who found the body. It had floated about one-half mile.⁸

Source: John Preston Arthur's History of Western North Carolina. The referenced source (8) was a letter to Arthur from [D.K. Collins](#)



United Community Bank

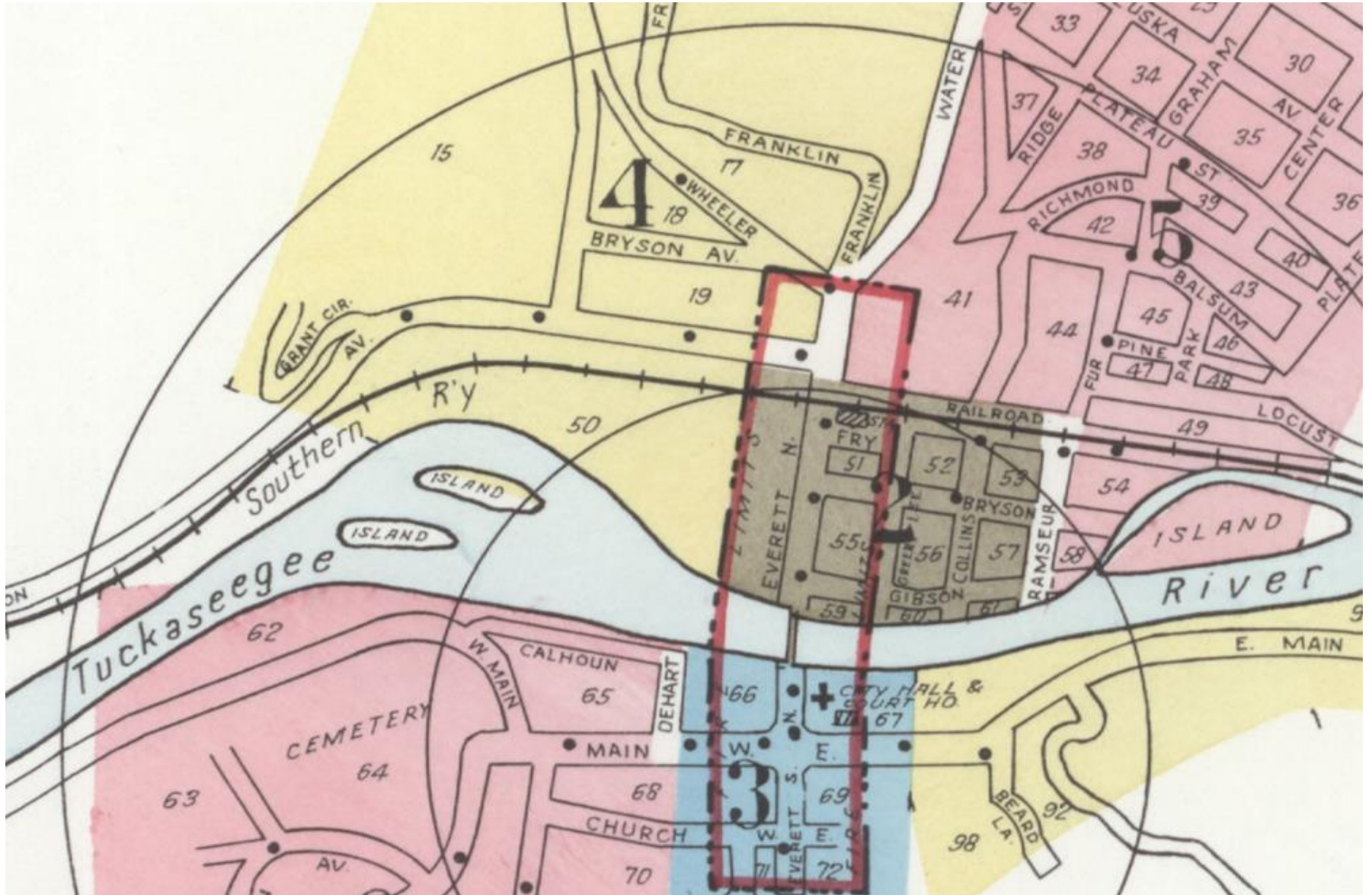
Bear Ford area

Pizza Hut

BC Cemetery

Source: Annotated Google Earth view

The river has changed (with some help from Jimmy Colville) 1937 Sanborn map showing two islands at Bear Ford



West's father, Erwin, was one of the administrators

20

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA,

Swain County.

Know all Men by these Presents, That we,

Erwin West
J. S. Elmore of Swain + C. T. Rogers

are held and firmly bound unto the State of North Carolina, in the sum of _____

Three Two Hundred Dollars, to the

payment whereof we bind ourselves and each of us, our heirs, executors and administrators, jointly and severally,

firmly by these presents.

Signed and sealed, this 28th day of March, 1881.

The Condition of the above Obligation is such, That if the above bounden _____

Erwin West & J. S. Elmore Administrators

of James E. West

deceased, do make a true and perfect inventory, and account of sales, of all the real estate, and all the goods and

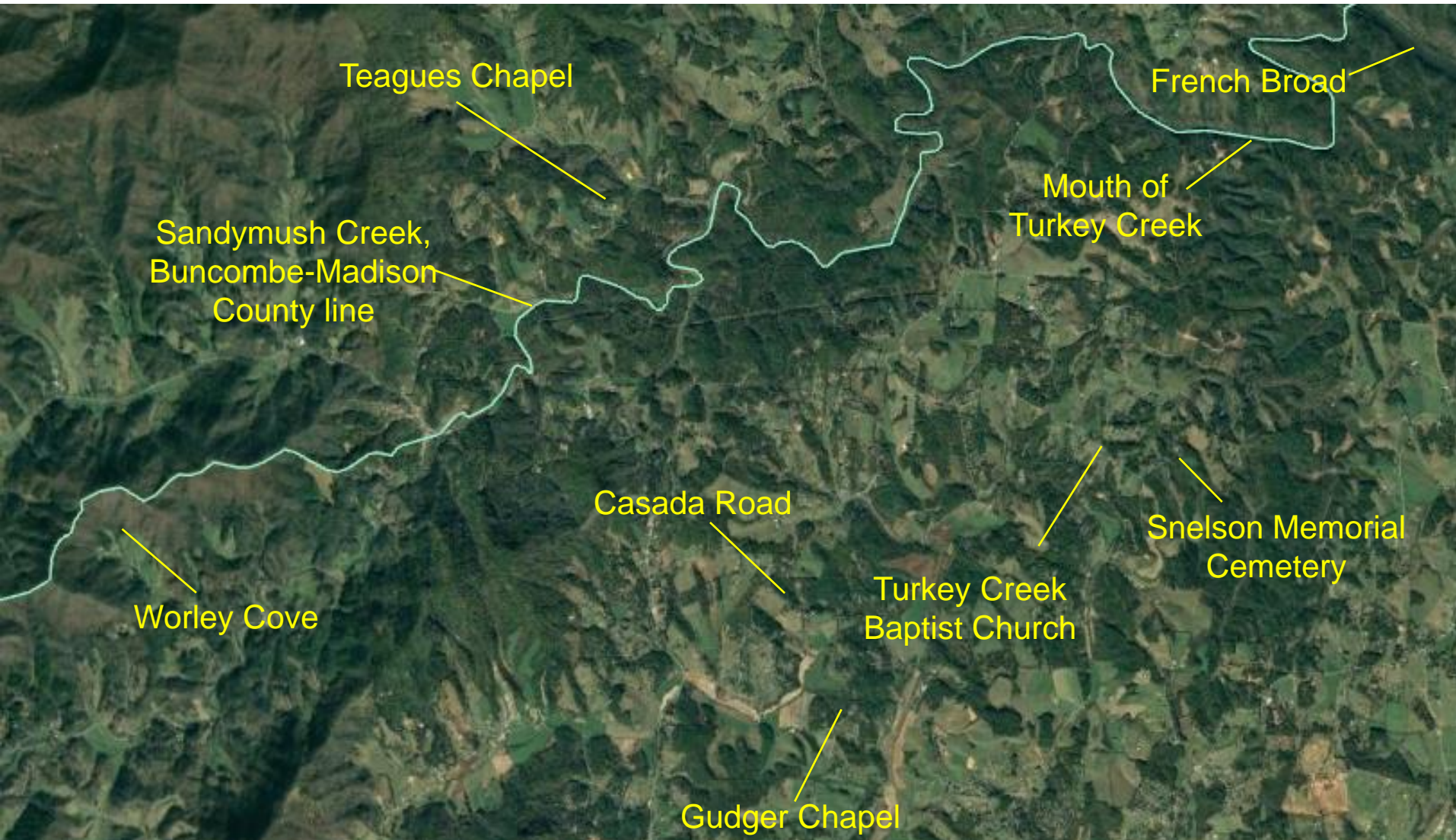
chattels, rights and credits of the said deceased, which have or shall come to their possession or knowledge, or

James was the oldest child in a family of relatively moderate means (1860 Buncombe census)

Post Office Leicester

Dwelling-houses— numbered in the order of visitation.	Families numbered in the order of visitation.	The name of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1860, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.			Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each person, male and female, over 15 years of age.	VALUE OF ESTATE OWNED.	
			Age.	Sex.	White, black, or mulatto.		Value of Real Estate.	Value of Personal Estate.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
85	85	Erwin West	31	M		Farmer ✓	1500	490
		Caroline "	27	F				
		James "	6	M				
		Martha "	5	F				
		Althia "	3	F				
		Josephine "	1/2	F				

The West family lived in the Turkey Creek – Sandymush area;
Several other families who moved to Swain came from here



Buried at Gudger Chapel: Erwin West (and some Casadas). [Robert Levi Snelson's](#) parents, grandparents and great grandparents (and numerous other relatives) are buried at Snelson Memorial and Teague Chapel. The same is true for [James Franklin and Emma Louise Hughes Teague](#) and children [Della Kate, Grover, and Roxanna](#).

R.L. Snelson's grandparents were near the Wests and of comparable means

Post Office Leicester

Dwelling-houses— numbered in the order of visitation.	Families numbered in the order of visitation.	The name of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1860, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.			Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each person, male and female, over 15 years of age.	VALUE OF ESTATE OWNED.	
			Age.	Sex.	White, black, or mulatto.		Value of Real Estate.	Value of Personal Estate.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
56	56	Atal Snelson	47	m		Farmer ✓	1000	439
		Annie "	47	f				
		Stacey "	21	f				
		John "	19	m				
		William "	16	m				
		Thos "	15	m				
		Ambrose "	14	m				
		David "	9	m				
		Rachel "	9	f				
		Sarah "	5	f				
		Mathan "	2	m				

← Robert Levi Snelson's father

The nearby Casadas, on the other hand....

The name of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1860, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.			Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each person, male and female, over 15 years of age.	VALUE OF ESTATE OWNED.	
	Age.	Sex.	Color, { White, black, or mulatto. }		Value of Real Estate.	Value of Personal Estate.
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Sarah Casades	36	F		Teacher	300	100
Ambros	13	M				
Allen	11	M				
Elizabeth	10	F				
Mother	8	F				
Vian	6	F				
Comodon	4	M				
John G	4	M				

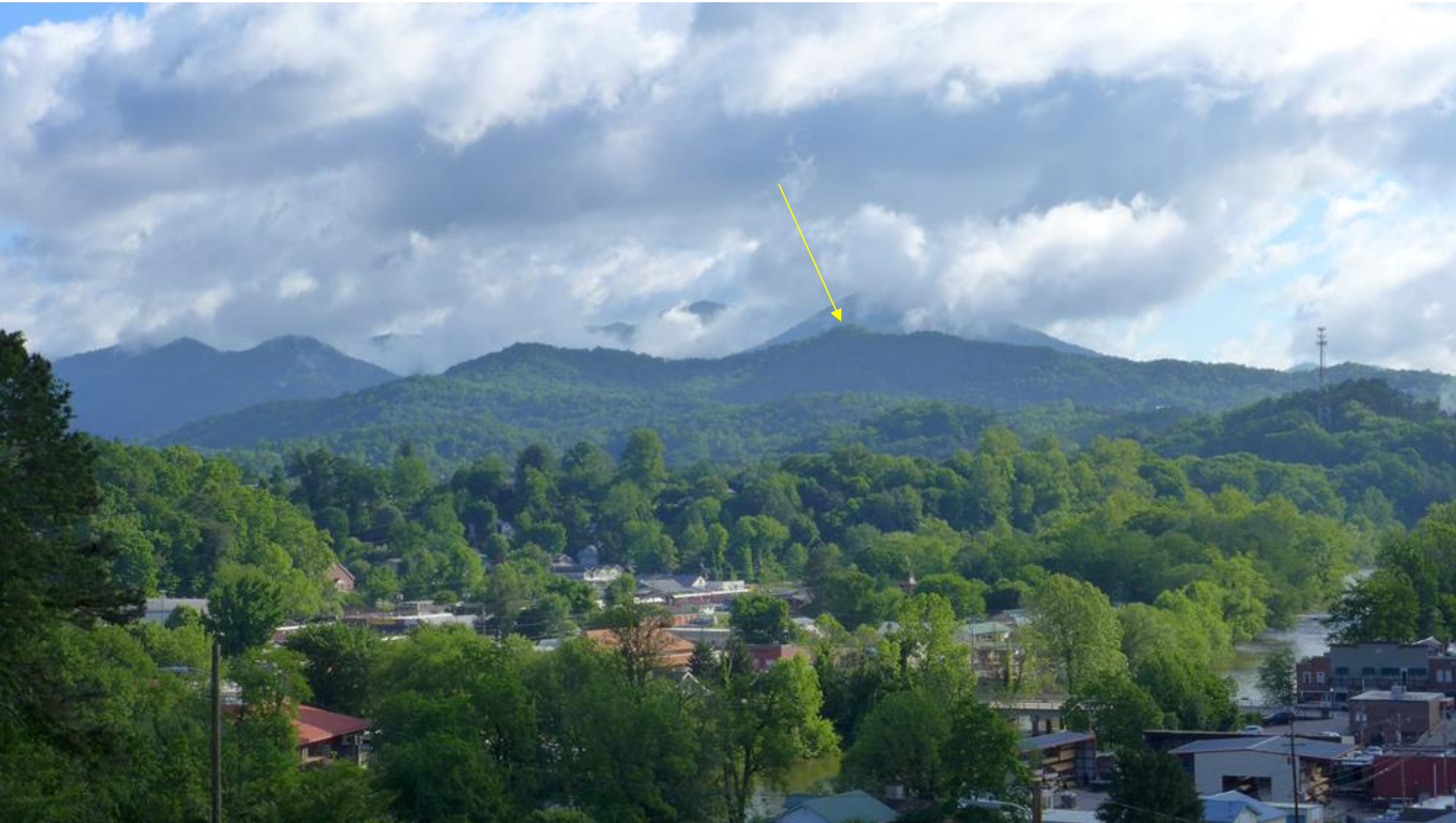
← Commodore (my father's namesake)

Sarah Teague Casada, widowed mother of William Ambrose Casada six other young-uns

Nearby Gudger family – presumably of the extended Gudger family for whom Gudger Chapel was named

The name of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1860, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.			Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each person, male and female, over 15 years of age.	VALUE OF ESTATE OWNED.	
	Age.	Sex.	White, black, or mulatto.		Value of Real Estate.	Value of Personal Estate.
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
R. L. Gudger	54	M		Farmer U	3 000	10 560
Mary	46	F				
John	20	M				
Elizabeth	19	F				
Hugh	17	M				
William	15	M				
Benjamin	13	M				
Louisa	11	F				
Not named yet	2	F				

Worley Knob, as seen from the BC Cemetery; it is a dividing point for four streams: Toms Branch, Betts Branch, Worley Branch, and Galbraith Creek



The knob is named for the Worley family which came here from the Sandymush area.

E.M. Scruggs
(1829-1895)

From 1884 Branson's Business Directory:

PHYSICIANS.

Names and Post-offices.

Davis (R. L.) & Reed (G. W.), Charleston.

Medler, L. M., Wayside.

Mingus, John, Ocona Lufty.

Scruggs, E. M., Charleston.

Ward, G. W., Nantahalalah.

SCHOOLS.

Names, Post-offices and Principals

Academy, Charleston, E. M. Scruggs.

School, Charleston, David Whiteside.

School, Nantahalalah, H. D. Welch.

School, Nantahalalah, A. H. Welch.

School, Nantahalalah, John McHan.

School, Nantahalalah, J. H. McHan.

School, Nantahalalah, Solomon McHan.

School, Nantahalalah, J. S. Smiley.

School, Ocona Lufty, W. H. Conner.

School, Ocona Lufty, George Bradley.

No. Pub. Schools—White 21 ; colored 2.

TEACHERS.

Names and Post-offices.

Bradley, Geo., Ocona Lufty.

Conner, W. H., Ocona Lufty.

McHan, Solomon, Nantahalalah.

McHan, J. H., Nantahalalah.

McHan, John, Nantahalalah.

Smiley, J. S., Nantahalalah.

Scruggs, E. M., Charleston.

Whiteside, David, Charleston.

Welch, H. D., Nantahalalah.

Welch, A. H., Nantahalalah.

Life experiences of E.M. Scruggs

- Taught school in Macon and Clay Counties prior to coming to Swain
- Enlisted as a private in Company H, 16th NC Infantry in 1861; wounded at Mechanicsville
- During recuperation was assigned to hospital duty
- Captured at Hatcher's Run (near Petersburg, VA) and imprisoned at Hart's Island, NY
- Medical Examiner for Macon County in 1872
- Railroad agent in Whittier
- Unable to support himself late in life

A case of incredibly bad timing

CHAPTER 401.

An act for the relief of E. M. Scruggs, of Swain county.

The General Assembly of North Carolina do enact :

SECTION 1. That E. M. Scruggs be and the same is hereby empowered to collect the arrearages of taxes for the years eighteen hundred and ninety-one (1891) and eighteen hundred and ninety-two (1892) in the town of Bryson City. This act to apply to the corporation of Bryson City only.

SEC. 2. That this act shall be in force from and after its ratification.

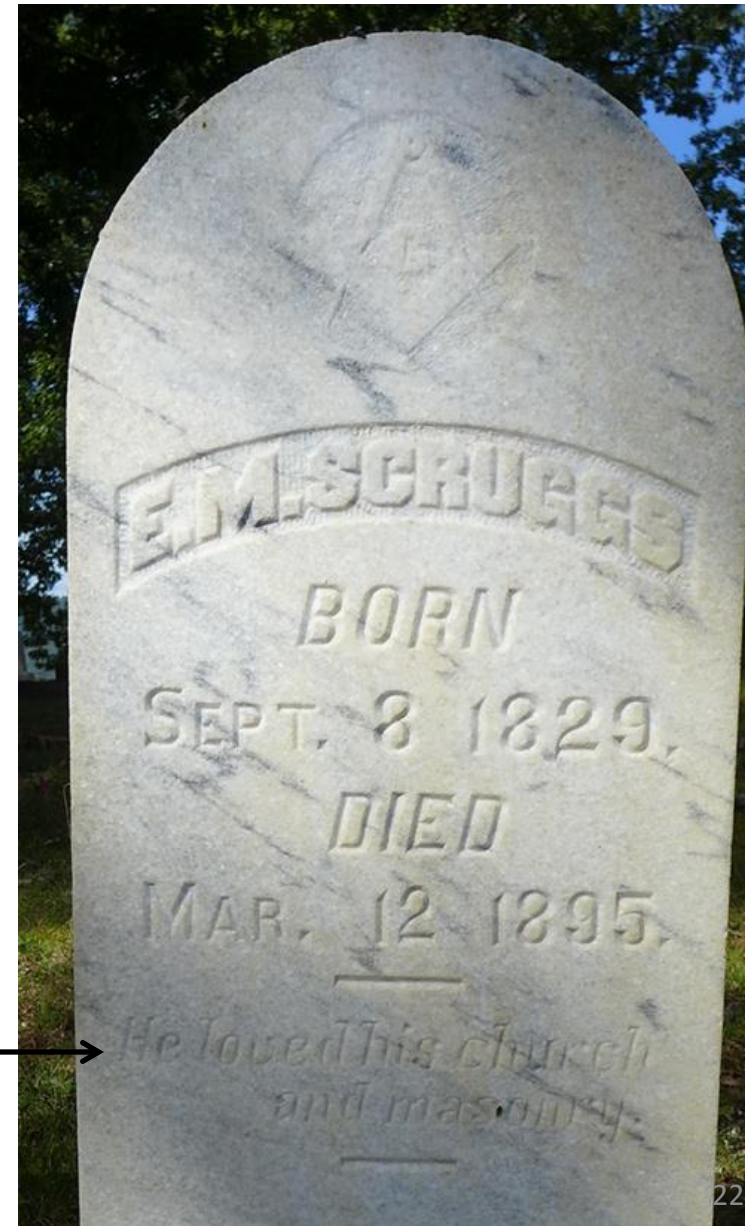
Ratified the 13th day of March, A. D. 1895.

Ebenezer M. Scruggs died on March 12, 1895

“Another Landmark Gone” (Bryson City Times, March 15, 1895)

“For more than forty years he has been a loyal and steadfast believer in Presbyterianism, and died in good hope.”

“He loved his church and masonry”



Dr. George W. Ward (1803-1900)

Reinterred from Judson to Bryson City Cemetery

The Ward family was moved from the Judson to the BC Cemetery during the Fontana project

- Dr. George W. Ward (1803-1900)
- Martha J. Ward (1826-1913)*
- Desdemona Ward Ingram (1843-1883)
- D.A.C. Ward (1856-1903)
- Augusta (Anderson) Ward (1851-1926) – wife of D.A.C.
- Grover C. Ward (1884-1936), son of D.A.C & Augusta
- Infant Ward (?-?)
- Margaret Ward, d/o Sallie Bailey** (1917-1917)

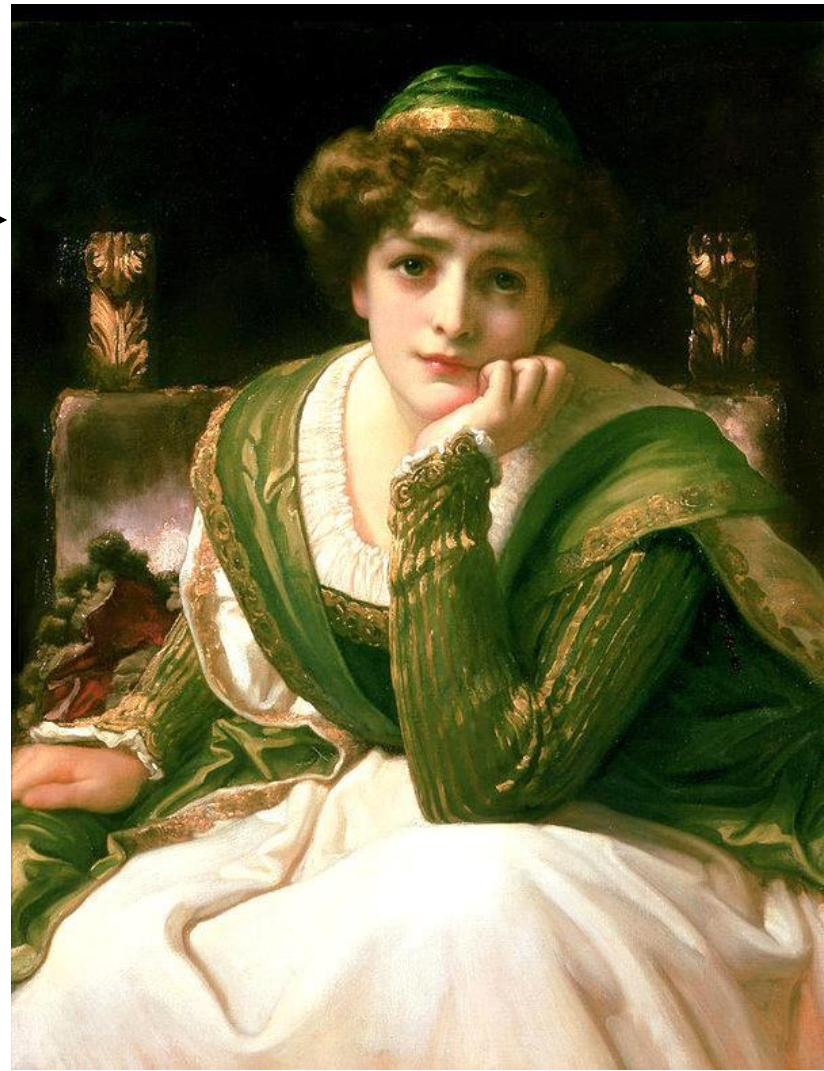
- In one census, Martha is listed as “Dr.”; family genealogies list her maiden name as Cuthbertson, but without proof.

** Sallie Ward Bailey was the sister of Grover C. Ward

Shakespeare's Desdemona
(painting by Frederic Leighton,
public domain)

Our [Desdemona Ward](#) married Isaac L. Ingram in Blount County, TN in 1863. The following year, a son, Aaron, was born to the couple in Indiana.

By 1880, Aaron Ingram was living with [Martha J. Ward](#), listed as head of household and occupation "Dr." in the census. Aaron was designated in the census as her nephew. Also living with her was her son, [D.A.C. Ward](#).



\$200 reward for Aaron Ingram

Height: 5 ft 6 inches

Weight: 170 lbs

Dark complexion

Scar on one cheek made by a knife

Wearing a suit of blue clothes when last seen.

A.M. Scales, Governor

Sept 19, 1886

Asheville Advance

Sheriff Welch of Swain County, NC is here after Aaron Ingram, who was shot by Mr. Gagin and Mayfield; Ingram is lodged in jail recovering.

Dec 8 1886 Indian Journal, Muskogee (not yet Oklahoma)

PURSUIT OF A WANTED MAN.

He Was thought to be Dead, but Was Captured and Convicted.

A dispatch from Charlotte, N. C., says: A case has just been concluded in the Swain county court which abounded in many peculiar incidents. About a year ago Aaron Ingram; a young farmer of that county, killed a neighbor named Sherman Welsh by stabbing him with a Barlow knife. Ingram then disappeared and was not heard from for nine months. The sheriff of the county, who was a cousin of the murdered man, organized a posse to go in pursuit. They got the track of the murderer in Rabun county, Ga., and followed him down through Toccoa, Danielsville and Washington to Augusta. At the latter place they declared they had captured their man and put him out of the way.

When the story was told in Swain county people believed it, Dr. Ward, an uncle of the fugitive, at once started on horseback to traverse the same route and stopped overnight with Col. D. W. Meadows, of Danielsville, Ga., who rendered him valuable assistance. The result was the discovery of a decapitated body which the old man took to be that of Aaron Ingram. A diligent search, however, failed to locate the head. The fact of the matter was that Ingram had given his pursuers the slip and made his way across country to Indian Territory. There he fell into the hands of two old citizens of Swain county, who had heard of the murder and the reward of \$700 for the murderer's capture. Ingram resisted arrest was shot down, and lingered between life and death for several weeks before he could be brought back to Swain county, where his trial began last Thursday. Col. Meadows was brought all the way from Georgia to conduct the case and secured for his client a verdict of manslaughter, for which he was sentenced to seven months in jail.

July 15, 1887 NC Prohibitionist

Summary of preceding page

Aaron Ingram killed George Sherman Welch with a Barlow in 1886. The Swain County sheriff at the time was Zebulon Vance Welch, first cousin of Sherman.

A posse led by Welch tracked Ingram to Georgia, and apparently decapitated the wrong man.

Ingram was later found in “Indian Territory” (presumably Oklahoma), shot and returned for trial. [Dr. Ward](#) secured an attorney who was able to get a reduced charge of manslaughter.

Other newspaper accounts refer to Ingram as the grandson of Dr. Ward, which appears to be the case.

It turns out that Sherman had a brother named [J.E.T. Welch](#) – which leads us to our next person in the medical profession

Dr. Joseph Elbert Taylor Welch (1848-1921) Emeline Gunter Welch (1851-1934)



Dr. Joseph Elbert Thomas Welch and Emeline Gunter Welch.

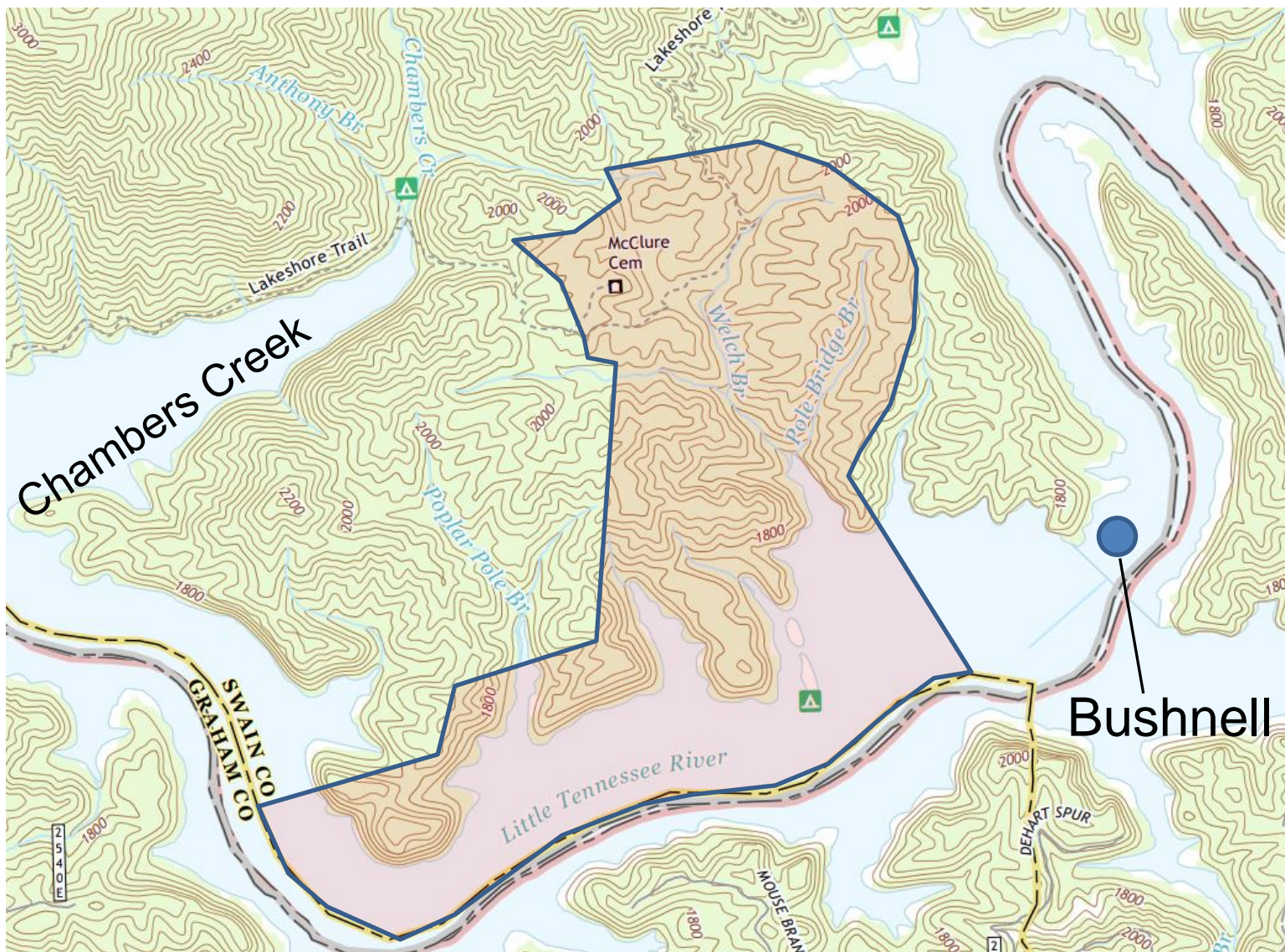
Some tidbits about [J.E.T. Welch](#)

- First-born of Adolphus Burton Welch and Sarah Sawyer
- Grandson of Catherine Deck and Joseph Welch – early Macon Countians; the Tennessee River Turnpike was also known as the Joseph Welch Turnpike (bankrupted him)
- Uncle and namesake of [Elbert Welch](#), BC Bank cashier, father of Virginia and Dan
- Served in Thomas Legion, per 1890 pension records
- According to Heritage of Swain County, he was licensed to practice medicine in NC; however, see below from Spring 1899 term of Superior Court
- Consistently listed his occupation in censuses as Farmer

52 State } Practising medicine } a fine bill.
 vs. } without license. } exras
 J. E. T. Welch. }
 submit guilty costs paid

53 State } Practising medicine } a fine bill
 vs. } without license } exras.
 Annie Clark }

Rough outline of Welch family property near Bushnell in 1943



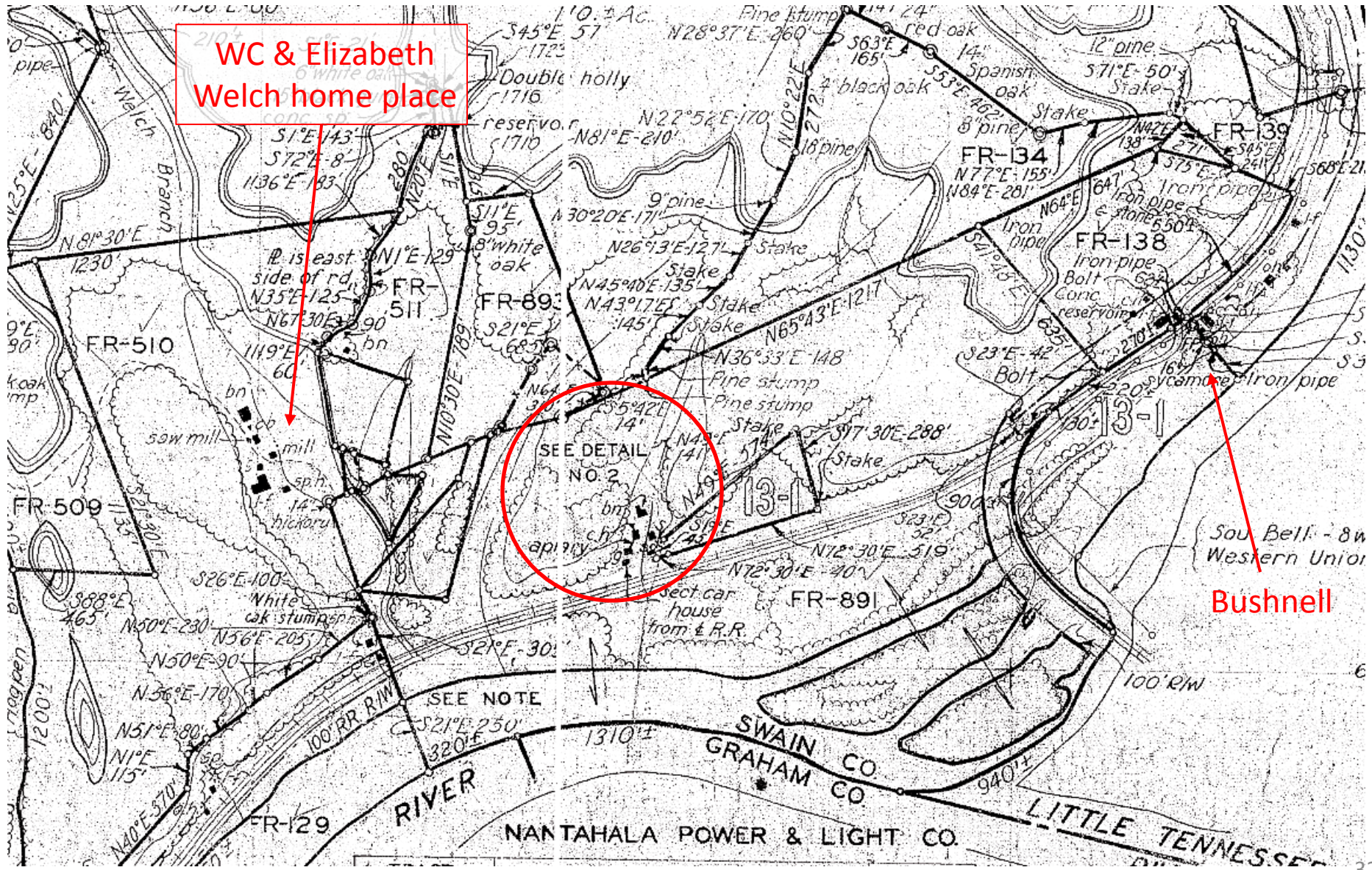
This was part of multiple land grants to Joseph Welch (grandfather) and A.B. Welch (father) as well as land acquired by JET and siblings.

TVA photo labeled the “**Columbus Welch** home”
near Bushnell



Photo source: TVA Collection, Atlanta National Archives

WC & Elizabeth
Welch home place



Bushnell

TVA photo labeled the “Ed Welch home”



This home is where Ed Welch and his siblings, including [Elbert](#), were raised by William Calvin and Elizabeth Welch, grandparents of Virginia and Dan Welch.

Photo source: TVA Collection, Atlanta National Archives

Bushnell School Group



28034-B

I'm fairly certain that the teacher is Christine Coggins Fisher
Photo source: TVA Collection, Atlanta National Archives

Bushnell Baptist Church, Sadie Welch Calhoun home



Photo source: TVA Collection, Atlanta National Archives

Jim Bumgarner pounding mill, George's Branch of Indian Creek



Photo source: Open Parks Network

Pounding mill schematic

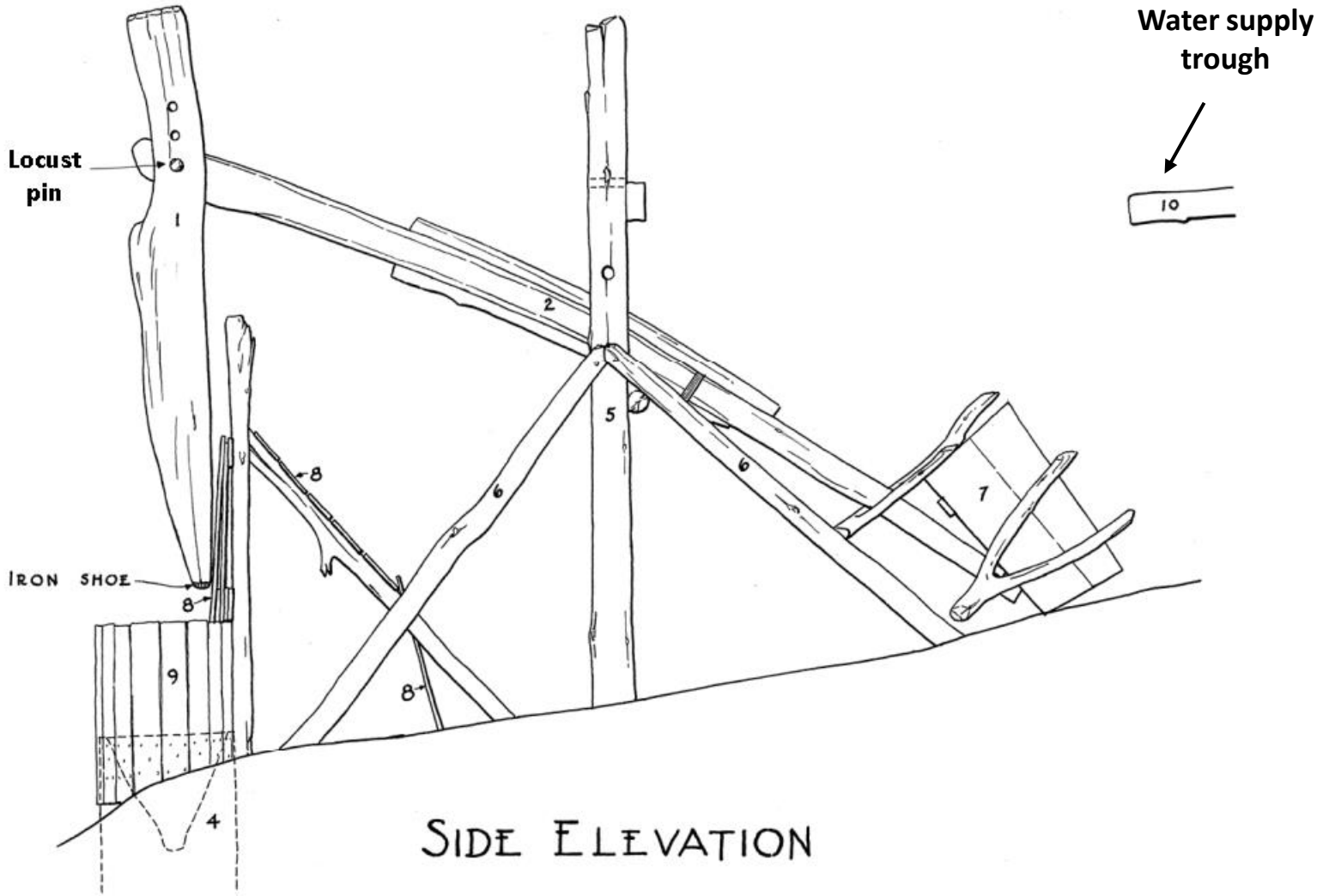


Photo source: Library of Congress

Swinging bridge near the mouth of the Tuckasegee at Bushnell

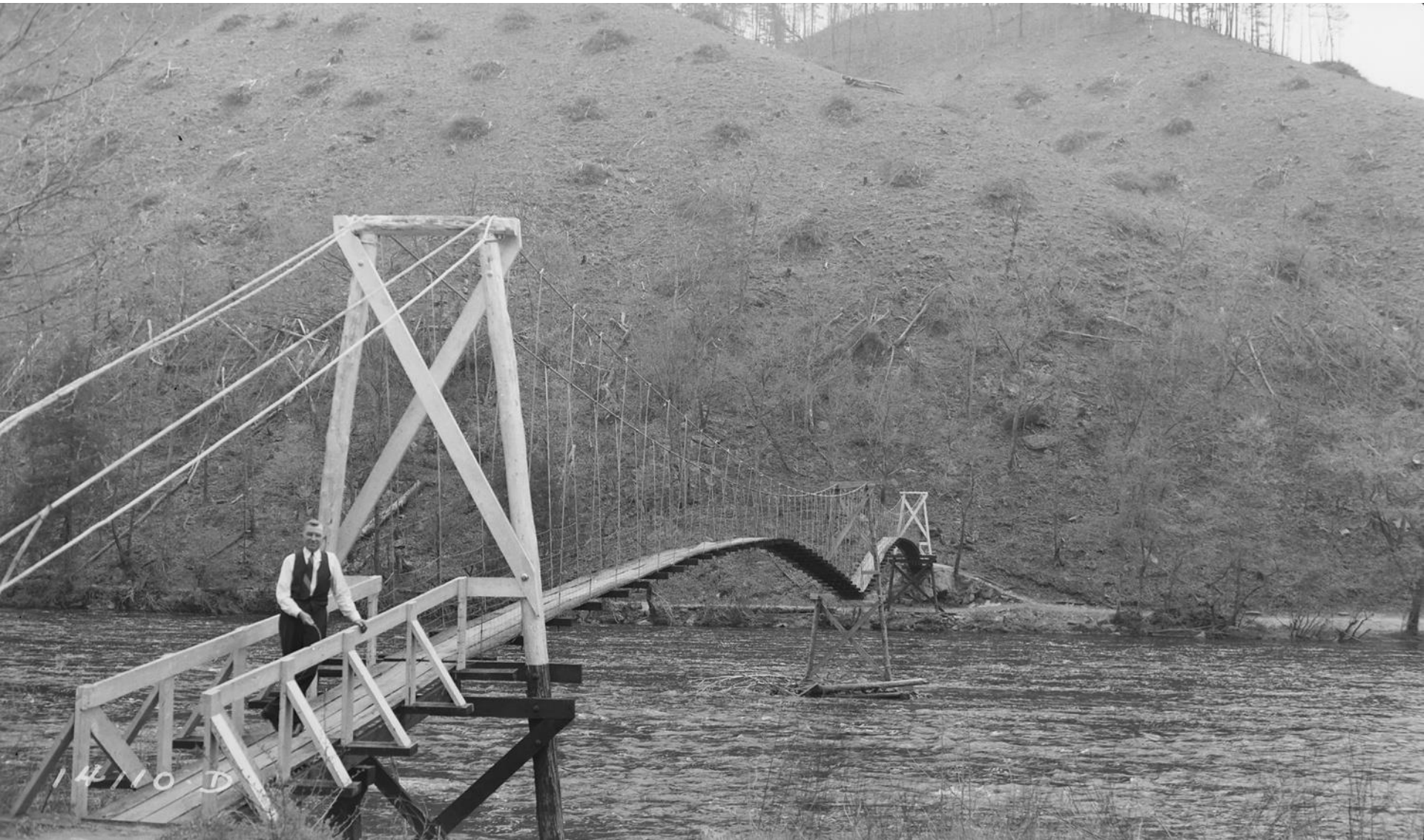
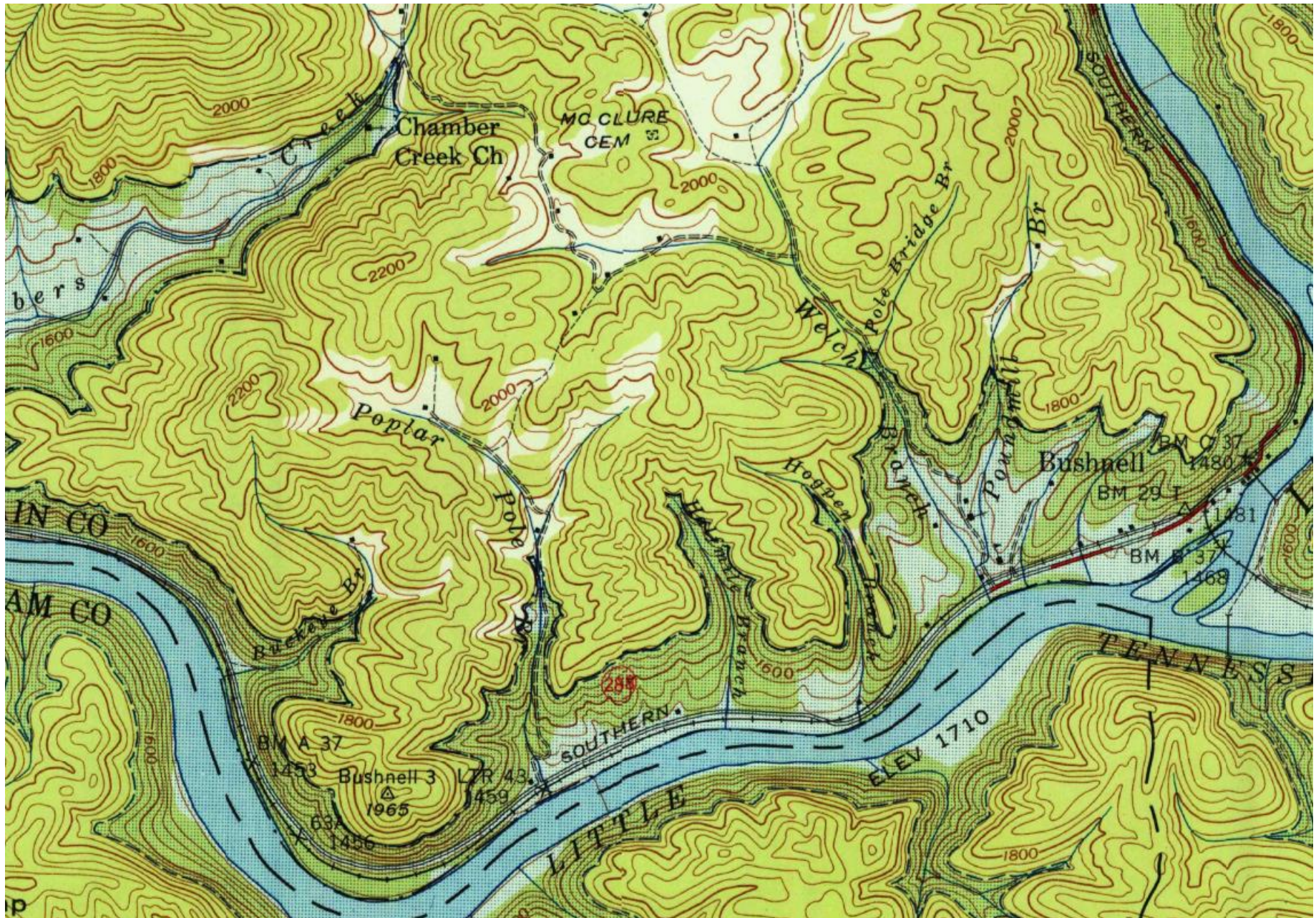


Photo source: TVA Collection, Atlanta National Archives

It is all now more than 200 feet underwater



Dr. J.E.T. Welch might well have more immediate relatives and descendants buried in the BC Cemetery than any other individual

- Spouse (1) Emeline Gunter
- Siblings (3) Justiana, Vance, and Amanda
- Children (8) JC, Columbus, Minnie (Coffey), Gilmer Burton, Willie May, Dora (Phillips), Nellie (Muse), Josie (Thomasson)
- Grandchildren (13) Roby Coffey, RG Coffey, Jr, Mabel Alberta Coffey, Dora Helene Coffey, Infant twin Coffey daughters, JC Coffey, Mildred Helen Muse, Infant son Muse, Berlin Thomasson, Maude Thomasson Wold, Evanell Thomasson, Emma Bell Thomasson
- Great-grandchildren (1) Franklin Thomasson



The Davis home and drugstore stood on the Bryson town lot 9, where the Clothes Connection and Chocolate Shoppe are today. Lot 9 and 14 (behind it) were deeded to [R.L. Davis](#) by [T.D. Bryson](#) in February, 1886.

“[Dr. Robert Lee Davis](#) is one of the practicing physicians of Bryson City. He also conducts a drug store. [Dr. Davis](#) is a native of Haywood County, having been born near Waynesville. He is a graduate of the Southern Medical college of Atlanta, and has been practicing for about 30 years. His was the first drug store to be opened in Bryson City, about a quarter of a century ago. [Dr. Davis](#) enjoys an extensive practice, and dispenses prescriptions filled from a good stock of pure drugs.” *Asheville Gazette-News*, 16 July 1910.

[Note: after several mergers, Southern Medical College evolved into the Medical Department of Emory University.](#)

1910 census data for Robert L Davis household and surrounding folks

- Living on Everett Street with wife Elizabeth, daughter Cora White (sic?) and fellow physician Walter O. Campbell, a 1907 immigrant from Scotland
- Others on Everett Street included:
 - Dr. James & Emma DeHart
 - Charles E & Ellen Welch
 - John H & Laura Dorsey and children Amanda and Aldah (sic)
 - William T & Martha Conley and children Lyndon, Paul, Glenn and Thomas
 - Cassius and Hattie Thomas
 - Noah & Maude Seay and children Eula and Harry and Maude's mother Mary
 - W.W. & Alma Wheeler
 - Jeremiah Helen Shank, children Jessie, Nell, Marie, and grandson Irving Stearns
 - Jonathan Hill and adult children Caldonia and George
 - Daniel R. & Ann Bryson and her sister, Lelia

He was the County Superintendent for Health for several years, and submitted monthly reports which appear in Bulletin of the NC Board of Health

- March, 1894: “No sickness to report. Sanitary condition of county and of county home good; that of jail fairly good – will be better when sewerage-pipes are put in, which will probably be soon.” The jail and county home each had four inmates.
- May, 1894: “No sickness to report. No reports from other physicians. Sanitary condition of county and public buildings good. We have just put sewerage pipes in the jail.” The jail and county home each had four inmates.
- June, 1894: “A few cases of catarrhal fever among children. Sanitary condition of county and public buildings good. No reports from other physicians.” The jail now housed 17 inmates.
- July, 1894: “Two cases of typhoid fever. Sanitary condition of county and public buildings first-rate.” Four inmates each in jail, county home.
- By 1902, [Drs. R.L. Davis, A.M. Bennett and J.A. Cooper](#) had taken turns as County Superintendent of Health.

He was a bear hunter, and practiced in Sylva as well as Bryson City

March 31, 1902 entry in Asheville Citizen:

“The sudden and unexpected death of the celebrated trained bear dog, the property of [Dr. R.L. Davis](#), a prominent doctor of Sylva, N.C., occurred a few days ago. The bears in that section will now have an opportunity to ‘go way back and sit down’ for awhile as this noted dog was a terror to bears for miles around.”

The latter part of his time here was traumatic

- [William Brown](#), the husband of his daughter [Cora Lee](#), died in a an August, 1916 railroad accident in the Willets area of Jackson County, a year after they'd been married. He was the train engineer.
- [Dr. Davis's](#) wife, [Lizzie](#), died in February of 1919.
- [Cora Lee](#) died (tuberculosis) on May 5, 1919, three days after completing her will leaving all her property to her sister and father. The will was witnessed by [J.E. Coburn](#) and [J.H. Dorsey](#).
- A September 11, 1919 account in the Carolina Mountaineer and Waynesville Courier indicated he was preparing to move to Sweetwater, Tennessee.
- He moved, along with his daughter Maude and her husband, George Bryson*, to Sweetwater Tennessee, where he died in 1921.
- His body was returned to Bryson City rest alongside Lizzie and the Browns
- Maude and George ended up in the Asheville area; some of their grandchildren are still alive

* George's great-grandfather was 1st cousin to [T.D. Bryson I](#).

The Brown tombstone was one that we paid to have straightened last winter



Removing the second course



Part three



Finished just before sunset

