

**“Whoops and Whip O’ Wills:” Re-Thinking the
Preservation and Interpretation of Cultural
Resources in Shenandoah National Park**

“Whoops and Whip O’ Wills:” Re-Thinking the Preservation and Interpretation of Cultural Resources in
Shenandoah National Park

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Figures	v
List of Images	vi
Introduction: Nothing but the Whip O' Wills	1
1 Mountain Communities of Virginia's Blue Ridge: A Look at 1930	7
2 The Eviction Experience	11
3 Economic and Social Organization and Interaction: A Historic Context Study for Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow	17
4 Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow: Where Heaven and Earth Meet	35
5 Conclusion: A Look to the Future	61
Appendix A: Trail and Vegetation Maps	65
References	77

Abstract

Since its establishment in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia 75 years ago, the Shenandoah National Park has been home to an abundance of wildlife and plant life as well as a haven for hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts. However, little is known about the previous inhabitants of the land the park now encompasses. In the mid 1930s, approximately 465 families were forcibly evicted from their homes, spanning eight counties and approximately 12,600 acres. This project seeks to study the economic and social makeup of mountain communities that existed prior to the park as well as propose new interpretation that more accurately tells the story and experience of those who lived there and were removed.

In focusing on mountain communities, this project will look specifically at one area of the Central District of Shenandoah National Park, Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow in Greene County. Remnants of houses, churches, school sites and artifacts of daily life are scattered through the woods along abandoned roads, fire roads and hiking trails. Without proper interpretation and context, these artifacts and ruins have little meaning. By relying on GIS technology, as well as oral histories, census records, memoirs, and land records, this project seeks to identify the families who lived in these areas and document their history, breathing life into the story of the mountain residents and their experience.

The importance of this project will apply beyond the park's visitors and the ancestors of those who once lived there. By urging the cultural resource managers at Shenandoah National Park to rethink their interpretive displays, exhibits and trail guides, the findings of this project can hopefully encourage the greater National Park Service to be more sensitive and thoughtful in the historic contexts provided at parks nationwide.

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List of Figures

Figure 1. Boundaries of Stanardsville Census Enumeration District No. 6, 1930	65
Figure 2. Changes in Ages of Heads of Household between 1920 and 1930	66
Figure 3. Distribution of Ages of Renting v. Owning Heads of Household, 1920	66
Figure 4. Distribution of Ages of Renting v. Owning Heads of Household, 1930	67
Figure 5. Early landowners east and west of the Conway River in Greene County, Va. Confederate States of America. Army of Northern Virginia. Corps, 2nd. Engineer Office, 1863. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division	67
Figure 6. Map of the Case Study Area, showing the circuit hike in red with Lewis Mountain and Pocasin Hollow highlighted in yellow.	68
Figure 7. Lewis Mountain and Pocasin Hollow Circuit Hike, Showing Mile 0 to 1.8	69
Figure 8. Lewis Mountain and Pocasin Hollow Circuit Hike, Showing Mile 1.8 to 4.1	70
Figure 9. Lewis Mountain and Pocasin Hollow Circuit Hike, Showing Mile 4.1 to 6.1	71
Figure 10. Lewis Mountain and Pocasin Hollow Circuit Hike, Showing Mile 6.1 to 8.6	72
Figure 11. Lewis Mountain and Pocasin Hollow Circuit Hike, Showing Mile 8.6 to 9.6	73
Figure 12. Lewis Mountain and Pocasin Hollow Circuit Hike, Showing Mile 9.6 to the End	74
Figure 13. Vegetation Cover circa 1941, Lewis Mountain and Pocasin Hollow, Greene County, Virginia	75
Figure 14. Vegetation Cover circa 1986, Lewis Mountain and Pocasin Hollow, Greene County, Virginia.	76

List of Images

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Image 1. Portion of steam engine in Pocosin Hollow, Shenandoah National Park.
Photograph by Norman Forder, Facilities Services Assistant, Shenandoah National Park. | 22 |
| Image 2. Front view of same steam engine, Pocosin Hollow, Shenandoah National Park.
Photograph by Norman Forder, Facilities Services Assistant, Shenandoah National Park | 22 |
| Image 3. Wheel that helped to power steam mill, Pocosin Hollow, Shenandoah National Park. Photograph by Norman Forder, Facilities Services Assistant, Shenandoah National Park. | 23 |
| Image 4. Untitled. Photographer: Dallas Anderson, n.d. From PATC Archives Box 4, Folder "Mountain People" | 25 |
| Image 5. Whiskey still in Nicholson Hollow. Photograph courtesy of Shenandoah National Park. | 27 |
| Image 6. Slaughter Trail descending to Devil's Ditch. Photograph by Author | 34 |
| Image 7. Author standing on Slaughter Trail looking west toward Michael Roach home site.
Photograph by Scott Rimm. | 35 |
| Image 8. Elizabeth Bernice Stoneberger Deane at her graduation from nursing school.
Photograph courtesy of Ruth Ann Stoneberger McKahan | 36 |
| Image 9. The family cemetery, south of the house, looking west. Photograph by author. | 37 |
| Image 10. A view south toward one end of the John Scott and Cora Virginia Roach homestead, showing a collapsed chimney. Photograph by Bradley Kendall | 38 |
| Image 11. Rock piles found on former Matthew Taylor property off the Slaughter Trail, Lewis Mountain. Photograph by Bradley Kendall. | 39 |
| Image 12. Stone walled mountain spring off the Slaughter Trail on Lewis Mountain. Photograph by Bradley Kendall. | 40 |
| Image 13. Elizabeth Gurnie and her sister-in-law Mary Taylor. Date Unknown. Photograph courtesy of William Sullivan. | 41 |
| Image 14. Silas Lamb. Dates Unknown. Photograph courtesy of William Sullivan. | 41 |
| Image 15. Rock walls lining trail near Conway River. Photograph by Steven Kendall. | 42 |
| Image 16. Part of a wood-burning stove, possibly the top to the burner. Located near abandoned road off of Pocosin Hollow Trail. Photograph by Author. | 48 |

Image 17. Piece of wood-burning stove, possibly the cover to the oven. Located near abandoned road off of Pocosin Hollow Trail. Photograph by Steven Kendall.	48
Image 18. Piece of sheet metal located near wood stove remains. Near abandoned road off of Pocosin Hollow Trail. Photograph by Steven Kendall.	49
Image 19. Notched post alongside abandoned road off of Pocosin Hollow Trail. Photograph by Author.	49
Image 20. Pocosin Hollow Fire Road at Mile 8.4. Photograph by Steven Kendall.	52
Image 21. Remains of Mission Workers' Home in Pocosin Hollow at Mile 8.5. Photograph by author.	53
Image 22. Depression in the ground where the clothing bureau once stood. Photograph by author.	53
Image 23. Stone steps which once supported the massive stone frame of the Upper Pocosin Mission Chapel. Photograph by author.	54
Image 24. Outline of foundation and partial chimney of Upper Pocosin Mission. Photograph by author.	55
Image 25. Pocosin Shelter, Central Section. Shenandoah National Park. Photographer: Abbie Rowe, n.d. From PATC Archives' Photograph Collection "Places – Pocosin Cabin"	57
Image 26. Pocosin Cabin, 1941. [photographer unknown], 1941. From PATC Photograph Collection "Places - Pocosin Cabin"	58
Image 27. John W. Stoneberger on Skyline Drive, circa 1950. Photograph courtesy of Ruth Ann Stoneberger McKahan	60

Introduction: Nothing but the Whip O' Wills

*"I have spent my days in the Blue Ridge Hills,
Where I couldn't hear nothing but the Whip O' Wills.
There the lightning gave such a beautiful light,
I could hardly tell when it grew night.
Where the old rattle snake crawles all summer long,
Crawles all summer till the frogs were all gone.
I had a good home near the Blue Ridge Top,
Where the wild cats hopped from rock to rock."*¹

This poem was written in 1935 by Edward A. Harris of Brown's Cove in the Albemarle County area of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Penned on paper for no other reason than trying to convey his heartbreak after being forced to leave his mountain home, "The Blue Ridge Mountaineer" is both a remembrance of and longing for times past. Edward Addison Harris was born at his father, Chapman Harris' home in Browns Cove in early 1869. It was here that he was raised on a 350-acre farm with horses, cattle and chickens, amidst a large production apple orchard. Evidence suggests that Harris later purchased the property his father had been renting, married Emma Sipe of Augusta County and raised more than ten children here. His property was condemned for inclusion in Shenandoah National Park in the mid-1930s, along with his six-room frame house with a cozy front porch. He was forced out of his mountain home, he so loved and into the lowlands below.²

Located within an hour's drive of millions, Shenandoah National Park in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia has an annual visitation of at least two million people. People traverse the 105-mile Skyline Drive, hike the park's numerous side trails and backpackers frequently travel the Appalachian Trail corridor through the area. However, few, if any, ever stop to consider the history of human use and adaptation which lies partially hidden within the park's boundaries. In order for the park to be created between 450 and 500 families were removed from homes and communities that had been established over centuries.³

¹ E.A. Harris, "The Blue Ridge Mountaineer," Christine Hoepfner Collection, No. 4042 Box 2, Folder 5. James Madison University, Carrier Library Special Collections, Harrisonburg, Va.

² Reed Engle and Caroline Janney, *A Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*. Shenandoah National Park Association, 1997; U.S. Bureau of the Census. Federal Census Population Schedules, 1860-1930. Albemarle County, Virginia. Ancestry.com [database online]. Available at <http://www.ancestry.com>

³ There is a vast literature base on the topic of Shenandoah National Park. Much of this is in the form of trail guides involving the Appalachian Trail and the park's extensive trail networks, as well as natural resource history. More recently, literature on the history of the park's creation has appeared. One of the best works to date is Darwin Lambert's *Undying Past of Shenandoah National Park*

Envisioned as early as 1924 and officially opened in 1936, the Shenandoah National Park was created as a place of scenic, natural beauty and to capitalize on its recreational and tourism potential. However, centuries of human use had degraded the land, in eyes of the park's founders, so that action had to be taken to "restore so far as may be possible, the natural conditions, ecologically and scenically, that once existed in the area." This meant the removal of humans and evidence of human use, which were incompatible with the park's mission of establishing recreational activities and an emphasis on natural resource protection. Ecological studies including reforestation and vegetation efforts, excavation of roads and roadside overlooks, and various landscaping principles led to a wilderness designation in October 1976. Today ecological reforestation has effectively covered 95 percent of the park and reclaimed most evidence of past human use and history.⁴

A focus on natural resources and visitor enjoyment was the trend with national parks established in the first 50 years of the National Park Service's existence. Yellowstone National Park was opened in 1872 "for the benefit and enjoyment of the people," with "all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within it to be retained in their natural condition." Set aside as a "natural park," management has mostly focused on the protection of its natural resources with little consideration of the history of human use in the area until just recently. Many of the other "crown jewels" of the park system, including Grand Canyon National Park, Yosemite National Park, Grand Teton National Park and Glacier National Park, have had similar fates with respect to cultural resources inside the park boundaries.⁵

which discusses the history of mountain communities. Within the past 10 years, a more extensive collection of works focusing on the eviction of mountain families has appeared. See Katrina M. Powell's *Answer at Once: Letters of Mountain Families in Shenandoah National Park, 1934-1938*. University of Virginia Press, 2009; Audrey Horning's *In the Shadow of Ragged Mountain: Historical Archaeology of Nicholson, Corbin and Weakley Hollows*, Shenandoah National Park Association, 2004. documents archaeological investigations of various mountain homesteads and suggests new interpretation of mountain culture. Jack and Carolyn Reeder have a number of books published through the Potomac Appalachian Trail which focus on the reminders of mountain culture which remain in the park. See *Shenandoah Secrets: The Story of the Park's Hidden Past*, Washington, D.C.: Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, 1991; *Shenandoah Heritage: The Story of the People Before the Park*, Washington, D.C.: The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, 1978. and *Shenandoah Vestiges: What the Mountain People Left Behind*, Washington, D.C.: Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, 1993. Lastly, John W. Stoneberger, who was raised in the Blue Ridge, wrote a vividly detailed account of growing up on Lewis Mountain, in Shenandoah National Park. See *Memories of a Lewis Mountain Man*. Washington, D.C.: Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, 1993.

⁴ Justin Reich, "Re-Creating the Wilderness: Shaping Narratives and Landscapes in Shenandoah National Park," *Environmental History* 6, no.1 (January 2001): 104-110.

⁵ *Administrative Procedure Act, Statutes at Large* 17, sec. 24, 32 (1872), available online

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/consrvbib:@field%28NUMBER+@band%28amrvl+v1002%29%29>

Renewed interest in the preservation of historic buildings with the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966 helped to shift course with respect to interpretation in national parks. One of the programs that stemmed from the act was the Mission 66 initiative. Responding to increased political and public pressure about the state of America's National Parks, then director of the National Park Service, Conrad Worth, proposed an improvement program to extend over ten years. The initiative received more than one billion federal dollars and visitor centers were created at national parks across the country. In many cases, such as in Shenandoah National Park, this was the first time interpretation was being produced and displayed about the history of the area. Many of these early displays and the dissemination of historical interpretation were considered highly inaccurate and offensive to the local community, but sought to support the park service mission of natural resource protection, and recreation and visitor experience⁶

The competition between national public memory, collective memories and group identity with respect to nationally significant places has become fierce in more recent years. In many instances, public memory is manipulated and recreated so a particular social value can be constructed. Martha K. Norkunas, in *The Politics of Public Memory: Tourism, History and Ethnicity in Monterey, California*, looks at the manipulation of artifacts and structures, particularly along Cannery Row. Through this process of manipulation, "these artifacts become socially valued. They in turn actually portray a selective history that legitimizes the values of that ruling class."⁷

Sometimes group collective memory directly contrasts and challenges the national public memory. Robert R. Archibald defines collective memory as, "narratives firmly rooted in place [which] bind people to each other through a shared past [and] pride in mutual accomplishment." Paul A. Shackel, in *Myth, Memory and the Making of the American Landscape*, argues that these groups have a choice: they can subscribe to the dominant interpretation, ignore it or challenge it. The new social history of the 1960s, which came to dominate the discipline of history by 1980, provided an opportunity for challenging the status quo. The new social history

⁶ Christine M. French, "The Emergence of the Mission 66 Visitor Centers." *Mission 66: Modern Architecture in the National Parks*, 1998. Available online, <http://www.mission66.com/documents/intro.html>

⁷ Martha K. Norkunas, *The Politics of Public Memory: Tourism, History and Ethnicity in Monterey, California*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993, 95

renewed interest in underrepresented groups, such as African-Americans, women's rights and roles in society, the working class and minorities are just a few areas which have renewed interest.⁸

At national parks across the country, archaeological investigations are uncovering and helping to challenge existing interpretation, such as the roles of African-Americans at Manassas Battlefield. Recent excavations revealed a new history about the roles of blacks in the postbellum period and the challenges they faced in racial discrimination in Virginia. At the George Washington Birthplace National Monument, excavations helped to deconstruct a myth about the location of Washington's home and present a broader history about other sites on the property not associated with the Washington family, such as Native American sites.⁹

One of the particular underrepresented and for a long time inaccurately depicted groups within Shenandoah National Park has been the mountain residents. However, since the mid-1990s renewed interest in presenting inclusive and accurate histories in the park led to the redevelopment of interpretive exhibits showcased in the Byrd Visitor Center in the Big Meadows area of Skyline Drive in 2007. The script, photographs and video footage shown in a film at the visitor center were also revised to portray the mountaineer culture and eviction experience in a more truthful light. The push for change was a direct result of a local group of former mountain residents and their descendants, known as the Children of Shenandoah, lobbying for change. Other activities, such as archaeological excavations by Audrey Horning in Nicholson, Corbin and Weakley Hollows of Madison County, helped in disproving the "hillbilly myth" surrounding mountain culture.¹⁰

Yet, despite the new exhibits, most visitors to Shenandoah National Park today have no knowledge of the mountain communities that thrived in the area before the park's creation. Crumbling foundations, stone

⁸Robert R. Archibald, *A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community*, Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 1999, 46; Shackel, *Myth, Memory and the Making of the American Landscape*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2001, 5

⁹ Shackel, *Myth, Memory and the Making of the American Landscape*, 74, 214-15

¹⁰ A collection of meeting minutes, letters and other ephemera from Children of Shenandoah was donated to the James Madison University Special Collection in 2002. It is available for research under the heading, Christine Hoepfner Collection, No. 4042, Box 2 Folder 5, James Madison University, Carrier Library Special Collections, Harrisonburg, Va; The result of Horning's archaeological excavations are published in, *In the Shadow of Ragged Mountain: Historical Archaeology of Nicholson, Corbin, & Weakley Hollows*, Shenandoah National Park Association, 2004.

chimneys, rusted cars and moonshine stills are still partially visible from trails throughout the park, but little to no interpretation exists to explain to visitors the significance of what they might see.

This project seeks to give new life to the history of the mountain communities of the Blue Ridge by providing a historic context for life in the mountains from about 1900-1930. Chapter One gives an overview of the mountain communities in 1930, in particular focusing on one census enumeration district in the Stanardsville precinct. This area of Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow in Greene County, Virginia was chosen for a number of reasons: First, the location of Lewis Mountain is well known because of the location of Lewis Mountain Campground along Skyline Drive. Second, hikers often traverse the first mile or two of the Slaughter Trail on Lewis Mountain and the first mile into Pocosin Hollow, but few link the two trails and visitor traffic is never heavy. Third, the area has trails that are accessible for hikers of a variety of skill levels. Lastly, because the area is not heavily trafficked, many of the historic sites which remain have been left untouched. A high concentration of homesteads, churches, outbuildings, cemeteries and various artifacts remain to tell a rich story of mountain life in the Blue Ridge.

Chapter Two discusses the eviction experience and varied reactions of mountain residents when they were forced to leave their homes. Chapter Three presents a historic context for Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow by detailing settlement and kinship connections, economic activities such as farming and timber extraction, daily social life including chores and kinship relations, education and religious life, whiskey and moonshine production and lastly the influence of musical heritage. Chapter Four provides a trail guide that connects Slaughter Trail on Lewis Mountain to Pocosin Hollow Trail as a 12 mile circuit hike, discussing the history of each mountain family that lived and worked along the trail, the history of structures and artifacts seen from the trail as well as the changes in vegetation patterns and interesting natural resources that can be seen today.

The concluding chapter looks at the future of interpretation in Shenandoah National Park and offers suggestions for changes in the focus on mountaineer heritage. The 75th Anniversary celebration which is

occurring through 2011 provides a window of opportunity for the park to renew focus on the significance of the communities which once stood in the park.

Chapter 1. Mountain Communities of Virginia's Blue Ridge: A Look at 1930

"The rest of my stay on earth, I am hoping to spend it, In the mountain home"¹¹

The Blue Ridge Mountains are the northern physiographic province of the Appalachian Mountain range that extends from Maine to Georgia. The specific area which Shenandoah National Park encompasses stretches for 105 miles from Front Royal in Warren County to Rockfish Gap in Albemarle County in Virginia and includes approximately 300 square miles in eight counties. Rising to a height of more than 4,000 feet at Hawksbill Mountain, the park area exhibits a wide range of elevations as well as rock and soil types. It is surrounded by the Shenandoah River to the west and includes numerous mountain drainages running into the Rappahannock, Rapidan, Robinson and Hughes Rivers to the east. A series of rivers and streams that begin near the crest of the mountain eventually flow down-slope to the east and west help to create a diversified habitat that both humans and animals have adaptively used since prehistoric times.¹²

While human use and adaptation of the Blue Ridge traces back to the prehistoric era, the focus of this project begins with human settlement and residency, in particular the early twentieth century. Initial land purchases and land use in the area began as early as the first half of the eighteenth century. Some of the earliest settlers were living within current park boundaries by the early 1800s. Settlement continued through the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century. An overview of the area encompassing Shenandoah National Park and a detailed look at the mountain residents in the 1930s provides a window through which to understand the average mountaineer,¹³ his or her occupation, family structure, home and other demographic, economic and social details.

In some ways, 1930 was a pivotal year for the mountain communities. Although a number of families had already moved out of the mountain region and into the lowlands prior to 1930, it was the last census year

¹¹ "The Old Mountain Home," poem by John T. Nicholson, available from <http://www.genealogy.com/users/s/m/i/Diane-N-Smith/?Welcome=1041121993>

¹² "Skyline Drive," Shenandoah National Park, National Park Service. Available from www.nps.gov/shen/historyculture/skylinedrive.htm; "Natural Features and Ecosystems," Shenandoah National Park, National Park Service. Available from <http://www.nps.gov/shen/naturescience/naturalfeaturesandecosystems.htm>

¹³ Although averages can often underestimate or overestimate important intricate differences in the life situations of mountain residents, they do provide a way in which to compare and contrast those differences.

that enumerated the people living in the Blue Ridge. It provides one of the final windows into their lives before eviction and resettlement. For that reason, it is worthwhile to spend some time analyzing the information provided by it.

By 1930, there were between 450 and 500 families residing within the eight counties encompassed by the current boundaries of Shenandoah National Park. According to a 1934 survey, only 197 families out of 465 surveyed owned their homes. The rest were tenant farmers, with a small number of squatters. The average tract size of resident families was less than five acres of land and the total acreage ownership by year-round residents was only about seven percent of park land. Of these families, approximately 30 percent received welfare aid, with an average of five people per family and a cash income of less than 200 dollars per family per year.¹⁴

While these figures may paint a discouraging portrait of the mountaineer's life, a closer look at a specific area of Greene County demonstrates that there was variety in the family structure, occupation concentration, and economic status of mountain residents. The results of the 1930 census, in particular those from the Stanardsville Magisterial District 6, suggest a tendency towards land ownership, employment within and outside the mountain community as well as a varied family size and structure. The area encompassed by District 6 is shown in Figure 1 and includes the northwestern part of Greene County, roughly bounded by the crest of the Blue Ridge to the north and west, the Conway River to the north and east, and just north of the Spotswood Trail (present day Route 33) to the south.¹⁵

The average tract size in Greene County was 75.48 acres at the time lands were condemned by the State Commission on Conservation and Development. Of those lands within District 6, the average landholding by resident owners was 84.34 acres.¹⁶ Owners constituted 55.1 percent of the 156 families living in the Stanardsville District in 1930, while renters made up 39.7 percent.¹⁷ At least 40 percent of the resident owners living in District 6 in 1930 were still living there by the mid-1930s. When the Virginia State Commission on

¹⁴ Based on detailed census taken in 1934 in order to determine planning for resettlement. See Lambert, *Undying Past*, 241

¹⁵ Figures 1-13 are found in the Appendix, which begins on page 65

¹⁶ This figure was tabulated by comparing resident owners listed in Engle and Janney's *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records* with heads of households enumerated in the Stanardsville Magisterial District 6 in 1930.

¹⁷ A small number of families were listed as "unknown" with respect to renting or owning their home. These individuals constituted 5.1 percent.

Conservation and Development purchased land for inclusion in Shenandoah National Park, not a single land owner in Greene County agreed to sell. Every tract was condemned by the state using eminent domain under a single blanket condemnation act.¹⁸

A comparison of the family composition of households in District 6 between 1920 and 1930 suggests some transitions were occurring in the area. Of the 200 families residing there in 1920, 151 or 80.5 percent were married, eight percent were single and 11.5 percent were widowed. Of the households with children, 105 or 52.5 percent had between one and four children, 30 percent had five or more and 18.5 percent had no children.¹⁹

By 1930, the number of families residing in the area had dropped to 156. Of these, 126 or 80.8 percent were married, 5.1 percent were single and 13.5 percent were widowed. Of the families which had children, 83 or 53.2 percent had between one and four children, 23.8 percent had five or more and 15.5 percent had six or more. Approximately 23 percent of the households had no children, but the majority of these households were either singles or very young or elderly couples.²⁰

By 1930, the average age of heads of household had increased significantly and a comparison to the 1920 census shows that a number of younger couples had moved out of the area, while the older couples remained. For example, a young couple named Isaac and Nellie Deane and their daughter were renting a house on Meadows Mountain Road in 1920 but by 1930 had moved into the lowlands of Albemarle County. Similarly, Ira and Anna Runion and their four children were renting a house along Middle River Road in 1920 but by 1930 had moved north to the Dranesville area of Fairfax County. Figure 2 shows the changes in distribution of ages of heads of households between 1920 and 1930.²¹

A shift in the age distribution of renters and owner residents between 1920 and 1930 suggests that some changes were occurring in the mountain community. Figures 3 and 4 shows the changes in age distribution of

¹⁸ 1935 Heads of Household compiled by Darwin Lambert in *Undying Past*, Appendix 5, 304; U.S. Bureau of the Census. Federal Census Population Schedules, 1930. District 6, Stanardsville, Greene County, Virginia. Ancestry.com [database online]. Available at <http://www.ancestry.com>

¹⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1920-1930, Greene County. Ancestry.com

²⁰ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1920-1930, Greene County. Ancestry.com

²¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1920-1930. Greene County. Ancestry.com

renters and owners between 1920 and 1930. In 1920, most of the families ranging in age from 19 to 39 were renting their home, but after age 40 there was a significant shift to homeownership, suggesting that the older families were able to obtain enough disposable income to purchase land and build a home (or move into an existing one). By 1930, there was a considerable shift in the age at which most heads of household were able to purchase their home. Most of the individuals between 20 and 49 were renting a home and not until 50 and older, were most of the heads of households listed as owning their home.²²

Most of the families in District 6 were farming oriented, either self-employed on their home farms or working out at neighboring farms. Of the 156 families living in the district in 1930, 104 or 66.7 percent were listed as farmers. For example, Frank Jarrell was listed as a farmer on his “own farm,” while others were listed as working on a general farm. A sizeable number of heads of household, 20.5 percent, were employed as local laborers which included a wide variety of occupations. John Breeden was listed as a teamster, Thomas Taylor was listed as a laborer at a saw mill, and Michael B. Roach worked in a coal mine. Approximately 13.5 percent were listed with other occupations. Henry C. Collins and Charlie Edwards were listed as missionaries, while Minnie Deane was a “private family servant” and Carroll Taylor was a local sheriff.²³

A few possibilities exist to explain the changes between 1920 and 1930. Because there were many families moving out of the mountains between 1920 and 1930, the overall shift in age could have affected the age distribution of heads of household owning their home. Also, a cursory examination of the households in 1920 and 1930 shows that some families from outside the mountain community were actually moving into and renting homes in the Blue Ridge. This knowledge combined with the fact that some individuals were holding jobs outside the mountain, suggests that the younger generation had a tendency to move into the lowlands for more opportunities, while older families who had more ties to the mountain communities wanted to remain where they were.

²² U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1920-1930. Greene County. Ancestry.com

²³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1920-1930. Greene County. Ancestry.com

Chapter 2. The Eviction Experience

“And that’s what I remember most about the day we left, was seeing the truck that my dad...he had just gotten someone to move us and he had everything on the truck. He had come down the day before or I don’t know...It couldn’t have been too long because he brought his cow and his chickens and things earlier. And there was no one down here to feed them. This particular day that we moved, they moved the family, I remember seeing everything, furniture on the truck. And my mother and her best friend with their arms around each other crying.”²⁴

Although a young child, when moved out of her home on the Rockingham County side of Bearfence Mountain, near Jollett Hollow, Pauline Apperson still remembers with vividness the day she and her family were forced to leave. Appearing in a film about the mountain resident’s life and eviction from the Blue Ridge in 1998, her story is interwoven with tears as she struggles to talk about the painful experience that so many endured. A precise number of the people who were forced to leave the park will never be known. Counts vary from 450 to as many as 500 families removed, from the early 1930s when the park was officially established, to 1938 when the last families were moved out of the mountains. According to a letter from local businessman Ferdinand Zerkel to the Resettlement Administration in 1935, there were still 550 families living on park land. However, a survey completed in 1934 counted 465 families and 2,617 individuals.²⁵

Interest in the area that would eventually become Shenandoah National Park began in the early 1920s with surveys and mapping of the land. Later, surveys of mountain communities and families were completed. The inaccurate interpretation of these surveys and subsequent publications about life in the mountains bolstered derogatory stereotypes about mountain communities and their culture, further legitimizing their removal for the park’s creation. *Hollow Folk*, written by two University of Chicago sociologists Mandel Sherman and Thomas Henry, focused on five areas in the uplands of Madison County. They began their book by noting,

“Here, hidden in the deep mountain pockets, dwell families of unlettered folk...sheltered in tiny, mud-plastered log cabins and supported by a primitive agriculture. One of these settlements ...has no community government, no organized religion, little social organization...the community is almost completely cut off from the current of American life. It is not of the twentieth century.”²⁶

²⁴ *The Iris Still Blooms*, DVD, Directed by Maria Hess. Harrisonburg, VA: WVPT, 1998.

²⁵ *The Iris Still Blooms*; Author Unknown, “A Promise Broken,” *Shenandoah Overlook*, Summer/Fall 1997, available from http://www.usgennet.org/usa/va/shenan/a_promise_broken.htm; Audrey J. Horning, *In the Shadow of Ragged Mountain: Historical Archaeology of Nicholson, Corbin, & Weakley Hollows*. (Shenandoah National Park Association, 2004): 11; Dennis E. Simmons, “The Creation of Shenandoah National Park and Skyline Drive, 1924-1936,” (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 1978): 157

²⁶ Mandel Sherman and Thomas Henry, *Hollow Folk*, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1933), 1-2

While there were numerous reasons for the creation of the park, including economic incentives, the image of mountain residents was exploited to further convince the public of reasons for the federal government to purchase the land. By perceiving that these people were backward and isolated, officials and creators of the park could claim that they were condemning land for the betterment of the mountain residents and that they would be better off in mainstream society.²⁷

The basis for material found in *Hollow Folk* was written earlier by social worker and educator Miriam Sizer. Employed between 1928 and 1932 by the commonwealth of Virginia to study the conditions of four hollow areas in Madison County, Nicholson, Corbin, Weakley and Richards, she found a community “cut off from civilization by environment.” These mountain people, according to Sizer’s shallow and patronizing perspective, were “steeped in ignorance, wrapped in self-satisfaction and complacency, possessed of little or no ambition...little comprehension of law, or respect for law, these people present a problem...” She promoted the concept of resettlement to park officials, suggesting relocation for the families in an area nearby, where similar climate and environment would allow them to carry on farming techniques as they had in the mountains. Her motive was not pure, however; she sought a future job for herself.²⁸

On 1 February, 1934, National Park Service director Arno B. Cammerer announced that all park inhabitants, including owners, tenants and squatters would have to leave their homes before the federal government could take ownership over the land. The announcement came somewhat as a surprise to residents, who had been misled by ambiguous policies regarding relocation. In November 1929, Secretary of the Interior assured mountain residents that, “the aged and infirm, crippled and blind,” occupying lands in the Blue Ridge mountains would be allowed to remain there for two year lease periods. He also promised that family cemeteries and graveyards would be maintained by the federal government. William E. Carson, chairman of Virginia’s Commission on Conservation and

²⁷ Charles L. Perdue and Nancy J. Martin-Perdue, “Appalachian Fables and Facts: A Case Study of the Shenandoah National Park Removals,” *Appalachian Journal* 7, (Autumn/Winter 1979-1980): 11.

²⁸ Reed Engle, “Miriam Sizer.” Shenandoah National Park, National Park Service. Available from <http://home.nps.gov/shen/historyculture/miriamsizer.htm>; The Story of the Removals, “The Ground Beneath Our Feet: New Deal Virginia,” Central Virginia Public Television, available from <http://www.vahistory.org/shenandoah.html#ch5>

Development and responsible for Virginia's role in paving the way for the park, was told that only residents directly in the path of planned development would have to be moved out. Even by 1932 when he was Assistant Director of the National Park Service, Cammerer's language was unclear about who could remain in the park. He stated in May 1932 that no residents could stay in the park land "except in special cases." The fact that the park was created amidst three presidential administrations, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt, helps to explain some of the uncertainty and confusion.²⁹

The uncertainty of their situation was not unnoticed by residents. A poem written by John T. Nicholson about his father's experience as an elderly man being forced to move, underscores this ambiguity. "Such a promise was the scheme to take my home for the park. Give an acre for the park, said the boosters of the park, if you want to live in the park...Five instead of one I gave for the park...Sad no favors to be shown, instead of stay, I must go." To add to the confusion, knowledge slowly leaked before its official announcement, of a special list of 43 individuals who would be given the privilege of lifetime estates in the park. The remaining families, however, would have to leave.³⁰

Not surprisingly, the majority of families refused to outright sell their land. As a result, the Commonwealth of Virginia passed a blanket condemnation ruling in December 1927. This ruling gave the state the right to use eminent domain to purchase land parcels from mountain residents under a single condemnation proceeding, instead of condemning individual tracts. This did not deter families from challenging the ruling, however. In various ways from legal action to physical refusals to leave their property, residents resisted the government's takeover of their land.

Melanchthon Cliser and his wife Carrie owned 46 acres near Panorama Gap, a large seven room home with indoor plumbing and electricity, a filling station and roadside diner called Blue Ridge Lunch. While Cliser

²⁹ Simmons, Dennis E. "Conservation, Cooperation, and Controversy: The Establishment of Shenandoah National Park, 1924-1936," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 89, No. 4 (October 1981): 400; Reed Engle, "Historical Overview," Shenandoah National Park, National Park Service, available from <http://www.nps.gov/shen/historyculture/historicaloverview.htm>; "Wilbur Reassures Shenandoah Folk," *The Washington Post*, Nov 13, 1929; "A Promise Broken," *Shenandoah Overlook*; Simmons, "Conservation, Cooperation and Controversy," 401;

³⁰ "The Old Mountain Home," poem by John T. Nicholson, available from <http://www.genealogy.com/users/s/m/i/Diane-N-Smith/?Welcome=1041121993>; Darwin Lambert, *Undying Past of Shenandoah National Park*, 254

was assessed \$4,855 for his property, he refused the offer, writing letters and telephoning federal officials to express his anger. When local authorities came to escort him from his home on 3 October, 1935, they had to handcuff and physically force him into the car. He continued to appeal the court decision until his death a decade later.³¹

Robert H. Via, who owned 154 acres in the Sugar Hollow area of Albemarle County, argued that the land condemnation was a violation of due process. Making its way to the United States Supreme Court in *Robert H. Via v. The State Commission on Conservation and Development of the State of Virginia*, the case eventually ended in a win for the commission on 12 January, 1945. Via appealed the decision, which was later dismissed in November of that year. In late December 1935, a transfer of deeds from the Commonwealth to the Federal government was officially accepted. It was time for the families to be moved out of the park and their homes demolished.³²

While stories of the mountain residents' battle to keep their land made headlines across the country, perhaps the more important stories were left out. The impact of eviction on mountain families, communities and mountain culture itself left visible marks and scars that remain today. Each family reacted differently and as a result, a wide range of emotions and perspectives to the eviction persist. It is necessary to delve into their story, from those who experienced the pain on a personal level, to be able to see it through their eyes.

Alice Beahm, whose was a young girl when her family's property was taken, vividly remembered her neighbor's experience when he was forced to move. "I can remember when this man, George Baker, learned the park was going to take his place. It was right next to ours. He and my dad stood right at the garden fence and cried like babies the day he had to leave. People was like family, then, y'know. But all that's gone now. And isn't it a shame."³³ Randolph Shifflett lived in the South River area of Augusta County with his parents and three other siblings. He was eight years old when his family was forced to move and remembered it "just as

³¹Engle, "Historical Overview," <http://www.nps.gov/shen/historyculture/historicaloverview.htm>; Cliser-Clizer Family History: Descendants of Mathias & Barbara Kleiser of Page County, Shenandoah Valley, Virginia-1790, "Cliser Eviction Story." Available from <http://cliserfamilyhistory.blogspot.com>; Lambert, *Undying Past*, 245.

³²Lambert, *Undying Past*, 234-40; To read the Via Case and others see the following citations: *Via v. State Commission on Conservation and Development of State of Virginia*, 296 U.S. 549 (S Ct. US, 1935) -- (D. C.) 9 F. Supp. 556; *Thomas Jackson Rudacille v. State Commission on Conservation and Development of State of Virginia*, 155 Va. 808, 156 S.E. 829, (S Ct. VA, 1931)

³³ "Shenandoah National Park: Pain Lingers for Mountain for Displaced Mountain Folks," 31 May 1982, *Washington Post*.

good as yesterday.” He believed that burning or tearing down family homes was to make a particular point. He believes, “It’s not too late to educate the public about this. The park wasn’t built with money, it was built with headaches, sadness and tears.”³⁴

Montella “Boots” Lam Herndon was only 12 when her family was forced to move from their home. While she doesn’t remember a lot of the particulars surrounding their eviction, she does remember that the “adjustment were hard on the whole family. Dad with no work. Homesickness. New schools where we were not accepted too graciously. All our cousins and friends that we didn’t see for years – some we have never seen since.” Stella Rhodes was in her teenage years when her family was forced from their home in the rocky Swift Run Gap area near the Spotswood Trail. She acknowledged that while her family was upset, she thought of the move as potentially providing better opportunities and a better quality of life, although she still missed the mountains. Some people admittedly believed that the move would create better lives in the long run, but for the most part, these individuals were the younger generation who had not lived out their lives in the mountains.³⁵

Edward Harris best expressed the feelings of the older generation in his poem entitled, *The Blue Ridge Mountaineer*, written soon after he was forced off his land in 1935.

“I woke up next morning at the rising of the sun,
I cast my eyes around me while, the tears began to fall.
I wish I was back on Old Browns Gap,
Where I used to raise potatoes as big as my cap.
I thought of my dear old mother, I was forced to leave behind,
I thought of my dear old father, who to me was so kind.
I thought of my old mountain home which I so dearly loved so well,
My feelings at that moment no human tongue could tell.
Oh, I would like to be back in my tumble down shack,
Where the wild roses bloomed at my door.
But now I am down in the low land low,
Where the water is warm and the land is all poor.”³⁶

Fred Collier, in an interview with a local newspaper more than 15 years ago, bitterly resented the fact that some thought it was to their betterment to move. “I’ve heard...people say it was a good thing that they moved out –

³⁴ *Daily Progress*, 29 May 1994, Rex Bowman

³⁵ Christine Hoepfner Collection, Montella Lam Herndon COS application; Tim Chapman, “Heartache on the Mountain: Families Remember the Anguish Shenandoah National Park Created,” *Daily News Record*, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 28 October 2010.

³⁶ E.A. Harris, “Blue Ridge Mountaineer,” Christine Hoepfner Collection

for the land and the people... That's hogwash. I can see when they want to preserve something for someone else. I'm all for that, like when you've got a rare species at stake. But the rare species at stake in this one was the mountain people, and they should have left 'em alone."³⁷

³⁷ Eddie Dean, "Appalachian Trail of Tears," *Washington Post*, 28 February 1997.

Chapter 3. Economic and Social Organization and Interaction: A Historic Context Study for Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow

“In my garden ring of hoe on stone, Rough ground to work with, but it’s all my own.”³⁸

Settlement, Identity and Kinship Connections

Formed from Orange County in 1838, the land encompassing Greene County was first surveyed by a group of appointed commissioners, including Thomas Lewis, in 1746 in order to determine the boundaries of the Fairfax Line. An examination of Orange County road orders suggests that there was interest in land use in or near the mountains along the Conway River even prior to this expedition. In February 1734, the county appointed John Garth as the “Surveyor of the highways from the Fork of Elk Run to Stantons River.”³⁹ One of the roads this order was referring to later became a narrow cart trail about four feet wide, by the late eighteenth century. Today it follows the same course as Route 662 from Wolfstown to Graves Mill in nearby Madison County. By the early 1740s, there was a petition to find “a road or bridle way the convenientest way from Jacksons Mill Over the ridge by the way of Swift Run pass.” Four years later, a road through the Swift Run pass had been established and the court ordered an assessment of the road which traversed a gap “along the Head of Swift Run to the Top of the Mountains.” Although both roads were established to the north and south of Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow, it suggests that there was enough vicinity in the area to necessitate good roads.⁴⁰

Evidence of settlement within the Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow areas dates to at least the late eighteenth century. Figure 5 shows some of the early landowners to the east and west of the Conway River in this area. The Jarrell family of Orange County had extensive land holdings across the county. Jeremiah Jarrell purchased on 28 April 1794, 79 acres on the “north side of a larger parcel” on the west side of the Conway River. Two years later in June, he bought 59 acres adjacent to this parcel and also on the west side of the river. John Jarrell, originally of Madison County purchased 42 acres on Lewis Mountain, bounded by the Conway and

³⁸ E.A. Harris, “The Blue Ridge Mountaineer,” Christine Hoepfner Collection, No. 4042 Box 2, Folder 5.

³⁹ Rapidan River, above its juncture with Conway was called Stanton’s River just above boundary of present day Greene County

⁴⁰ Ann Brush Miller, Orange County Road Orders, 1734-1749, Virginia Highway & Transportation Research Council, Charlottesville, VA: April 2004, Available online at http://www.virginiadot.org/vtrc/main/online_reports/pdf/85-r2.pdf, 7; David Lee Ingram, “The Fairfax Line,” available from http://www.surveyhistory.org/the_fairfax_line1.htm; Floyd, *Lost Trails and Forgotten People*, p.?: Miller, Orange County Road Orders, 66, 116

“Pecocony,” or Pocosin Fork in 1798. An adjacent tract was sold by the same family to James Taylor on the same day. By the 1840s, the Jarrell family had passed on a number of parcels to children and grand-children. Pemberton Jarrell, grandson of Jeremiah sold a sizeable tract to Robert and Lucinda Taylor in the early 1840s, who then sold to the William Lamb family in April 1845. Jeremiah Jarrell Jr., executor of his father’s estate on Lewis Mountain sold 193 acres to James Slaughter Sr. in May 1847.⁴¹

The numerous land transactions in the early to mid-nineteenth century ushered in a new period of land use and inhabitation for this area of the Blue Ridge Mountains. While early on, many individuals purchasing large land tracts here often had other land elsewhere in the county, by the mid-1800s, most land purchases made were by owner residents. These tracts were later divided. For example, James Slaughter Sr. built a home soon after purchasing his Lewis Mountain tract, constructing a seven room, 1 ½ story log and shingle-roofed structure with double end exterior chimneys. By 1860, his son James Jr. and wife Comora were also living on the tract, but in a separate house. In February 1871, James Jr. purchased acreage, and soon established a working farm.⁴²

Interpersonal connections extended across family lines based on location. Generations of the Lamb family clustered around Devil’s Ditch and lower, southern slopes of Lewis Mountain. Matthew Lamb purchased land sometime in the first half of the 19th century. By 1850, he had married, purchased 100 tilled and woodland acres and was operating a farm. Two of his sons owned land abutting Matthew’s by 1880 and owned working farms of their own. William Lamb was the first to purchase land in the area for the second branch of the Lamb family. He purchased land from the Jarrell family in 1845. By 1880, at least 33 acres of this property

⁴¹Deed of Sale from Robert and Lucinda Taylor to William Lamb, 1 April 1845, Greene County, Virginia, Deed Book 2, page 449, Greene County Courthouse, Stanardsville, VA; Deed of Sale from Pemberton and Elizabeth Jarrell to Robert Taylor, date unknown, Greene County, Virginia, Deed Book 2, page 259; Deed of Sale from Jeremiah Jarrell Jr. to James Slaughter Sr., 18 May 1847, Greene County, Virginia, Deed Book 3, page 396.

⁴² John W. Wayland, *A History of Shenandoah County*, (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1980): 42; The Slaughter House was later purchased by John Scott and Cora Virginia Roach, who added on at least one addition; “James Slaughter House,” No. 172, Virginia Historical Inventory of the Works Progress Administration, 28 May 1937; Census Bureau, 1870 Agriculture Schedule, Stanardsville, Greene County, Virginia; Census Bureau, 1870 Population Schedule, Stanardsville, Greene County, Virginia; Joan Horsley, “The Jarrell Family of Early Virginia with focus on Daniel Jarrell and his wife Mary Davis: Their Family, Relatives, & Neighbors.” Raleigh, NC: J. Horsley, 2009. Available online at http://www.joanhorsley.org/reports/Jarrell_Report11Feb10.pdf

had been divided for his son Jeremiah who owned a farm. By 1930, three of William Lamb's married grandsons and their respective families owned property surrounding the initial tracts he purchased in 1845.⁴³

Relationships were not necessary dependent on family connections, however. Kinship networks formed based on the needs of families to help with activities from butchering animals to peeling tree bark and the reliance on each other in times of need. John Otto, in his ethnohistory of forest fallowing practices in the Appalachian Mountains found that, "each farmstead belonged to a dispersed rural neighbourhood... whose numbers were united by friendship, marriage, and kinship... the members of a community called on their friends, relatives, and in-laws for aid in clearing land, gathering corn, collecting livestock, and slaughtering animals."⁴⁴

John W. Stoneberger, who was born on Lewis Mountain at the home of his grandmother, Cora Virginia Keckley Roach⁴⁵, recalls in his memoir *Memories of a Lewis Mountain Man*, the days of "mutton feasts." Large groups of families, neighbors, children and elderly folks would gather together from the surrounding area. The event was centered around the butchering of a few sheep, but entailed many people working together to cook and clean. It was a time for romances to bloom, young parents to show off their babies, and games, contests and singing. As Charlie Snow of Pocosin Hollow recalled, "the whole mountain got together to eat, drink and dance."⁴⁶

Apple butter making was another event that required the involvement of many families. For as long as a week, families would gather to peel apples, boil them and rejoice to the sound of fiddles and banjos. Raymond Morris, who lived about 15 miles south of Lewis Mountain near Simmons Gap, remembered the event as much

⁴³Census Bureau, 1850-1880 Agricultural Schedule, Stanardsville, Greene County, Virginia; Marla Snow, Marriage Register, Greene County, Virginia, available from <http://genealogytrails.com/vir/greene/marriages.html>; Shenandoah National Park Tract Map.

⁴⁴ John Solomon Otto, "Forest Fallowing Among the Appalachian Mountain Folk: An Ethnohistorical Study." *Anthropologica* 30, no.1 (1998): 5.

⁴⁵ The southern tradition of double names was common throughout the Blue Ridge Mountains. For example, Cora was most commonly known as "Cora Virginia." Her husband's first name was John, though he was known as "John Scott." Throughout this work, mountain residents will be referred to by their full names (double names) where applicable. Special thanks to Ruth Ann Stoneberger McKahan for this information.

⁴⁶ Dorothy Noble Smith, *Recollections: The People of the Blue Ridge Remember*. (Verona, Va.: McClure Printing Company, 1983), 21, 43; Stoneberger, *Memories*, 49-50.

more than a party. “About thirty to forty got together with a bunch of boys and girls. The custom of getting a kiss if the paddle touched the side of the kettle has come down through the ages. I did it many a time.”⁴⁷

While there was much enjoyment and bonding to be had, what the events came to symbolize was the giving nature of the mountain people and their dependence on one another. As Stoneberger claimed, “giving was the life blood of mountain life, without generosity life would have been almost impossible.” Neighbors borrowed items on a daily basis, such as mules or horses, with the knowledge that their kindness would be reciprocated in turn. A “working match” was the term used by mountain residents to refer to neighbors helping each other out with various chores that included harvesting the garden, butchering hogs and other related activities. In exchange for their generosity, the hosting family would invite the visiting family to stay for dinner and sometimes the night. In helping one another, respect and trust beyond family lines created long-term kinship connections.⁴⁸

Economic Activity

Tanbark and Lumber Industry

Tanbark, or the process of stripping trees of their bark so that the tannins could be processed to create leather, was a profitable industry in the Appalachian mountain region through much of the early 19th century. Tannins, which are found in the bark of various types of trees and other natural substances such as leaves and tree fruit, are required in the process of turning skins and hides into leather. Evidence of the tanbark industry, appeared as early as the 17th century in Virginia. However, the first tanneries were established in the Shenandoah Valley until 1800.⁴⁹

In 1872, the Cover’s Tannery was built in Elkton, VA at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains along Elk Run. By 1912, the tannery was producing 212 soles of leather per day. Eventually, the Elkton Tannery was

⁴⁷ Stoneberger, *Memories*, 44-50,56; Smith, *Recollections*, 45

⁴⁸ Stoneberger, *Memories*, 7; Smith, *Recollections*, 44

⁴⁹ Mia Barb, *Tanbark Industry: Part of an Oral History Project on The Tanbark Industry in the Shenandoah Valley*, Carrier Library Special Collections, James Madison University, May 1991.

the largest producer of tanbark in the Shenandoah Valley. At its height, the tannery employed over 200 people.⁵⁰

By 1908, Virginia was one of the largest consumers of chestnut bark extract, with more than 16 million pounds consumed annually. As early as 1910, John Scott Roach began a tanbark business on Lewis Mountain. He employed 30 men each spring who peeled bark with a spud bar and then transported the cords of bark to the Elkton tannery. While the tannins in nearly all herbaceous trees could be used for tannin extraction, chestnut and oak were preferred overall. Luckily, Lewis Mountain was forested with a high concentration of various types of oaks and chestnuts, until the chestnut blight set in. Using mule-drawn bark wagons, men would make the two day, 30-mile round trip to Elkton twice a week. For about six weeks each spring, the Lewis Mountain men worked tirelessly and for their labors were paid, on average, six dollars per cord.⁵¹

G. Luther Kite, who owned numerous tracts adjacent to the county line in Greene County, also participated in the tanbark industry. He invested in steam-powered saw and stave mills throughout much of the county north of Swift Run, which were used to cut the wood later carried to Elkton. Similarly, William B. Stoneberger, son-in-law of John Scott Roach, built a steam-powered sawmill on Lewis Mountain in the mid-1910s, paying his workers one dollar per day. Amazed at the machine's ability, large gatherings of people would come by foot and horse daily to watch it work. Remnants of the mill can still be found along the trail, such as the steam engine seen in Figures 1 and 2, and the steam engine wheel in Figure 3.⁵²

⁵⁰ John Walter Wayland. *A History of Rockingham County, Virginia*, (Dayton: Ruebush-Elkins Co., 1912), 376-80; John W. Wayland, *Men of Mark and Representative Citizens of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, Virginia: Portraits and Biographies of Men and Women* (Staunton: McClure Co., 1943), 92-3.

⁵¹ Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, "Tanbark and Tanning Extract," *Forest Products* no.4, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1909); Stoneberger, *Memories*, 7, 55; Smith, *Recollections*, 18

⁵² Preston Breeden, interview by Edward Garvey, Samuel Moore and Charles Anibal, 19 November 1982 in Pocosin Hollow, Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection, SC4030, Special Collections, James Madison University; Stoneberger, *Memories*, 1, 18



Image 1. Portion of steam engine in Pocosin Hollow, Shenandoah National Park.
Photograph by Norman Forder, Facilities Services Assistant, Shenandoah National Park.



Image 2. Front view of same steam engine, Pocosin Hollow, Shenandoah National Park.
Photograph by Norman Forder, Facilities Services Assistant, Shenandoah National Park



Image 3. Wheel that helped to power steam mill, Pocosin Hollow, Shenandoah National Park.
Photograph by Norman Forder, Facilities Services Assistant, Shenandoah National Park.

Farming

Seasonal changes in pasture, grazing, and crop lands allowed mountain residents to use their land to its fullest degree. J.L. Armentrout, who owned the Shenandoah Tourist Home and a large valley farm in Rockingham County east of the Blue Ridge, paid John Scott Roach 50 cents per head of cattle each month to pasture his 150 cattle on the grasslands of Lewis Mountain. While pasture land for grazing animals was typical near the top of the mountain, often these lands were also used for small farm gardens to grow vegetables. “Forest fallowing,” was also often practiced by mountain farmers. Whereas much of their land was located in unimproved woodlands, farmers would practice “shifting cultivation to return fields to fallow for two or more decades (or until covered with forest) before being cultivated again.” Open grazing lands would gradually shift to wooded forests, while adjacent land would be burned and cleared for farming. That this technique was practiced by members of the Lewis Mountain and Pocosin communities is not known definitively. However, comparisons between tract assessments completed in 1927, land use plats in 1936 and vegetation cover in 1941,

suggest that this practice may have been employed in the area. Because the soil was rocky and steep in many places, landscape stabilization through terracing and rock clearance was also required.⁵³

Farming was an entire family production, with even the youngest children helping out in small ways. Sally Atkins, who lived on Hazel Mountain in Madison County, remembered as a young girl working in the corn fields, milking cows and feeding hogs and chickens. Image 4 shows an example of a mountain homestead with small gardens, fields and outbuildings near the house. The boys were often in the fields plowing and retrieving wood from the forest, but also helped to gather produce from the garden. Edward Nicholson, who lived a few miles south in Nicholson Hollow of Madison County, recalled his responsible to help on the farming, raising, “corn, rye, oats, buckwheat, millet, cane, beans, cabbage and onions. We had an orchard with apples, cherries and pears.” According to Carrie Makeley, a missionary who lived with the Roach family while teaching at the Roach mission, noted in her diary that everyone helped to pick fruit and vegetables, including herself.⁵⁴

Special techniques for food preservation and storage allowed the mountain families’ crop and produce supply to last year round. For example, cabbages buried in winter, along with turnips and potatoes would be placed in a trench and covered with leaves and brush to keep from freezing. Describing the process in more detail, Preston Breeden of Pocosin Hollow remembered digging, “a hole in the ground and put[ting] boards over top of it. You just move a board and reach in there and the taters stayed just as good. Turnips the same way, dig a hole and put them in the ground.” Fruit, such as apples, however, had a different storage process. They would be piled up with corn fodder placed over them.⁵⁵

Families often grew produce in excess in order to sell it at the local store. The most common items to sell were eggs, butter, apples and nuts gathered in the woods. Sally Atkins claimed that their family received 15 cents per dozen eggs and 25 cents per pound of butter sold at the Estes Store near Sperryville in Rappahannock County. Orchards abounded throughout Greene County, providing excess produce for families. Columbia

⁵³ John Solomon Otto, “The Decline of Forest Farming in Southern Appalachia,” *Journal of Forest History* 27, no.1 (January 1983):20.

⁵⁴ Smith, *Recollections*, 12; Dennis Whittle, transcription of Carrie Makeley Diary, 4 November 1916 to 20 November 1916, Frederick W. Neve Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.

⁵⁵ Breeden, interview by Garvey et al, Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection.

Taylor, who lived in Pocosin Hollow, had 28 trees of various fruit and her neighbor Sam Taylor owned 69 apple and 10 pear trees, valued at 74 dollars. Willie and Edgar Lamb's two properties on the eastern slopes of Lewis Mountain together had 70 apple and peach trees. While some of the fruit was used for home consumption, extra was taken to the nearby store in Fletcher, just east of Pocosin Hollow along the Conway River. Children would also gather the fruit from chestnut and walnut trees to sell locally, receiving 25 cents per gallon.⁵⁶



Image 4. Untitled. Photographer: Dallas Anderson, n.d. From PATC Archives Box 4, Folder "Mountain People"

Moonshine Whiskey and Other Spirits

The production of alcoholic beverages was nothing new to settlers moving into the Blue Ridge in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The tradition of distilling corn, wheat and rye into whiskey and fruits into brandy had been passed down thousands of years and carried to America by English, German and Scots-Irish immigrants. The topography and landscape of the Blue Ridge Mountains was particularly conducive

⁵⁶ Sally Atkins, Interview by Dorothy Smith, 27 February 1979 in Sperryville, VA, Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection, SC4030, Special Collections, James Madison University; Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*; Donald D. Covey, *Greene County, Virginia: A Brief History*. (The History Press, 2007),73; Breedon, interview by Garvey et al, Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection.

to the distilling process. Because of the rough, rock and steep condition of many mountain roads and the long distance to carry crops to market, mountain residents quickly found that distilling grains and fruit was a method of preserving their crops, especially those which were apt to quickly spoil.⁵⁷

Former mountain residents of the Blue Ridge readily acknowledge the presence of whiskey or “moonshine” distilleries throughout the mountains. In some areas, the presence of stills for moonshine production was more prominent than others. For example, Nicholson Hollow and the Hazel Mountain community of upper Madison and lower Rappahannock Counties were widely known as the “Free State Hollow” by outsiders. George Pollock who opened Skyland in the late 1800s would frequently purchased moonshine from Nicholson Hollow men for five dollars per gallon. An inventory of a Weakley Hollow man, who lived just south of Nicholson Hollow, revealed “two stills and an apple mill; quantities of corn, apples, wine and brandy; and empty barrels and hogsheads.” Ruins of stills around Hazel Mountain, Hannah Run and Nicholson Hollow, such as the one in Image 5 demonstrate the continued usage of distilleries into the early 1900s.⁵⁸

In Greene County, particularly Pocosin Hollow and Lewis Mountain, the production of moonshine may not have been as extensive, but it existed nonetheless. Susan Preston, a missionary who worked in Pocosin Hollow in the early 1900s, noted that before the presence of the Episcopal Church, there was a “stillhouse on this mountain side, where the mountaineers came to get their liquor.” There was undoubtedly whiskey production in the area, after the establishment of missions, however. John W. Stoneberger noted his mother’s recollection that “a gallon jug of moonshine whiskey with rock candy in it was always on the mantelpiece over the fireplace in the living room,” at the home of her mother, Cora Virginia Roach. Preston Breeden, who lived along present day Pocosin Hollow Fire Road, noted that most families that produced moonshine, did so on a small scale –only five to ten gallons at a time.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ http://www.blueridgeinstitute.org/moonshine/old_spirits_in_anew_world.html

⁵⁸ Smith, *Recollections*, 16; Audrey J. Horning, “Myth, Migration and Material Culture: Archaeology and the Ulster Influence on Appalachia.” *Historical Archaeology* 36, no.4 (2002): 141-2

⁵⁹ Preston, *Life in Pocosin Hollow*, unpublished manuscript; Stoneberger, *Memories*, 59-60; Breeden, Interview by Garvey et al.

Mountain families prided themselves in careful and pure distilling of whiskey and brandy, both for themselves and the traveler that might stop by, using “less sugar, but very pure water, clean equipment, and good ash wood for slow distilling” John Scott Roach considered having moonshine in his home a necessity, as it was his way of showing hospitality to neighbors and strangers traveling through the area as well as “one of his ways of being a servant of God.”⁶⁰



Image 5. Whiskey still in Nicholson Hollow. Photo courtesy of Shenandoah National Park.

⁶⁰Stoneberger, *Memories*, 60

Religion, Education and the Episcopal Church Missions

“There we learned of Someone who owns cattle on a thousand hills, also the potatoes under the hills, and that He loves us all and all men should love one another in the Valley and beyond the Blue Mountains.”⁶¹

Religion was an important and daily aspect of mountain life for people on Lewis Mountain and in Pocosin Hollow to the south. Beginning in late 1880s, Archbishop Frederick W. Neve began an effort to bring Episcopalian influence and education into the mountains of Greene County. He established a total of 30 missions between 1890 and 1920. After visiting mountain residents living near Ragged Mountain, Neve believed that it was his calling to spread the gospel to people living throughout the Blue Ridge Mountains of Greene County. He claimed, after visiting Shifflett’s Hollow residents, near Simmon’s Gap in Greene County, “It seemed that there was no school there and the children were growing up in ignorance, apparently through no fault of their parents... [I]t struck me that if my plans for evangelizing the Blue Ridge were ever to be carried out, now was a propitious time to make a beginning.” Neve worked tirelessly to raise funds for the establishment of these institutions and advertised widely for mission teachers and qualified individuals to provide religious services. Because the lack of public schools in existence in the mountains, wherever Neve established a mission church, he opened a school as well.⁶²

The first mission church and school in Greene County was established at Simmons Gap in Shifflett’s Hollow by late fall 1900. Neve continued to establish missions in the Blue Ridge of Greene County through the 1920s. Two of these particular missions, Upper Pocosin and St. Andrew’s Mountain Mission (Roche’s Mountain Mission) were located in the Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow areas. Both missions worked jointly to unite the area in various religious and educational activities, ranging from baptisms and marriages to Sunday school.⁶³

⁶¹Stoneberger, *Memories*, 79

⁶² Frederick Neve, “Genesis of Mountain Missions in the Diocese of Virginia,” *Our Mountain Work* 1, (March 1909), Box 2, Frederick W. Neve Papers, Accession No. 10505, Special Collections, The University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA; Ralph Dexter Davison, Jr, “Frederick W. Neve: Mountain Mission Education in Virginia, 1888-1948,” (Ph.D Diss., 1982, University of Virginia): 4; Davison, “Frederick W. Neve,” 5

⁶³ Davison, “Frederick W. Neve”

The effort to establish a mission in Pocosin Hollow began as early as 1901, when a Reverend R.C. Cowling, who worked closely with Neve, reported his findings on an area known as “Pocosan.”⁶⁴ When Cowling left the diocese in 1902, a young Deacon named Robb White took over his work in the mountains. By early 1905, work had begun on establishing a mission in the area. Neve received a generous gift of \$800.00 from a woman in Boston who had donated money to build a school-chapel in memory of her father. By October, a small log structure measuring 12 x 18 feet had been erected along with a small chapel named the “French Memorial Chapel,” in honor of the woman who donated money for its construction.⁶⁵

Under the supervision of two sisters, Frances and Marion Towles, the Pocosin Mission was successful and expanded operations. By 1910, between 15 and 20 children were enrolled at the Pocosin school and by April 1914, enrollment grew to 32. Sometime before 1915, a clothing bureau was built and operated at the mission site, where items were made or donated and sold at low prices to the surrounding community. The money made from the bureau sales was not for profit, rather it was reinvested in the work at the mission. From June through August 1915, six praying sermons were held with a total of 352 in attendance. In 1920, an enlarged 16 x 20 foot frame school house replaced the previous one. At its height, the mission also included a 20 x 58 foot stone chapel and 11 x 18 foot frame garage.⁶⁶

The mission charge was tiring work for the two sisters, who often oversaw baptisms, marriages, funerals, taught school and visited the families on a regular basis. One of the sisters commented in a 1913 article in *Our Mountain Work*, “It is no uncommon thing for us to be called up in the dead hours of the night to go five or six miles to see someone who is ill or dying and we often ride ten or twelve miles a day just looking after the ordinary details of the work.” However, the sisters grew to love their position and their “dear little Mission Home” in the hollow. They later said that the years spent at Pocosin were “the happiest of their lives.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ In older texts, Pocosin is referred to as Pocosan. The term comes from a Native American word meaning “swamp.”

⁶⁵ Davison, “Frederick W. Neve,” 119; Susan Preston, “Life in Pocosan Hollow,” unpublished manuscript, Neve papers

⁶⁶ Davison, “Frederick W. Neve,” 257; *Our Mountain Work* 3, no. 1. (September 1913), Neve papers; *Our Mountain Work* 5, no.1 (September 1915), Neve papers

⁶⁷ *Our Mountain Work* 3, no.1 (September 1913), Neve Papers; Davison, “Frederick W. Neve,” 124; *Our Mountain Work* (April 1914), Box 2, Neve Papers

Mission of Saint Andrew (Roche's Mountain Mission)

Located not too far up the mountain from the Upper Pocosin Mission, was another mission established by John Scott Roach and his wife in 1915. According to Frederick W. Neve, John Scott Roach believed that he might die the summer of 1915 and asked his daughter, Elizabeth Bernice, who had been attending services at the Pocosin mission, to baptize him. When he did not pass away that summer, he felt determined to start a mission on the mountain as thanks to God. The first service was held on August 22, 1915. Reverend Frank E. Persons transferred from the Lower Pocosin Mission near Fletcher to take charge of the Roche Mission. Early on he was attracted to the beauty of the location and found it to be “a more attractive place for the permanent mission.” In the month of August alone, four public sermon services were held with a total of 248 in attendance along with two private services hosting 25 people.⁶⁸

A school had been established much earlier on the mountain at John Scott Roach's request as well. In 1912, he requested that the Greene County School Board allow him to appropriate the funds to open a school on Lewis Mountain. Icie Marie Roach, his daughter, was the first instructor. She was paid 15 dollars a month and services were held in the same building as the Sunday services for Upper Pocosin. When the Roche Mission was established, a school was sanctioned by the mission and opened in October 1916. Carrie Makeley left the Pocosin Mission to teach on Lewis Mountain soon after it was established.⁶⁹

The frame building used for the Roche Mountain school had been constructed near the Roach Cabin, shortly before Carrie Makeley's arrival on 21 October 1916 and by at least 30 October, there was a painted blackboard for her use. John Scott Roach, commonly known as the “Chief of Pocosin Hollow,” or the “Old Man of the Mountain,” had been instrumental in its construction, intending it as a gift to the Episcopal Church. Carrie lived in the family's home for nearly two years, while she taught at the school, growing close to the Roach family as well as their Lamb and Taylor neighbors. She became quite close to John Scott Roach before

⁶⁸ Davison, “Frederick W. Neve,” 287; Episcopal Missions in Greene County, unpublished notes, Green County Historical Society, Stanardsville, VA; *Our Mountain Work* 6, no. 1 (October 1917), Neve Papers; *Our Mountain Work* 5, no.1 (September 1915), Neve Papers

⁶⁹ Stoneberger, *Memories*, 41-2; Davison, “Frederick W. Neve,”

his passing in 1917 and during the remainder of her stay with the family, worked to bring his dreams and wishes for the school and mountain mission to become reality.⁷⁰

Mountain Music Heritage

In 1916, Cecil Sharp, director of Stratford-on-Avon, a school for folk song and dancing in England, began his search through the southern Appalachians for English oral traditions to bring back to England. He must have been impressed by the musical traditions of mountain residents in the Virginia Blue Ridge, as he collected and later published material from families in Albemarle County. Later, the Virginia Folklore Society published and even recorded the musical traditions of individuals and family groups from Warren, Madison and Greene Counties.⁷¹

Musical appreciation and talent was indeed widespread throughout the mountains of Greene County. Jessie Lam, who married Lona, a daughter of John Scott and Cora Virginia Roach, played the fiddle and banjo, teaching Lona to play guitar and sing. Elizabeth Bernice Roach Stoneberger, daughter of the Roaches, and her son John W. Stoneberger, played several instruments. Elizabeth Bernice was a talented pianist while her son played a number of string instruments, such as the mandolin, banjo and guitar. John sang in a number of bands and even on the radio throughout the years, a testimony to the wonderful gift of music passed down through the generations. His daughter, Ruth Ann Stoneberger McKahan and her family carry on the tradition today, singing in various choirs and plays.⁷²

Bluegrass, as it is commonly referred to today, was derived from the musical traditions of mountain residents living in this area. The music sung in the mountains dealt with a variety of topics, from newly composed religious songs or popular gospel hymns to secular tunes about love, home and the family.⁷³

⁷⁰ Carrie G. Makeley, "Mission of Saint Andrew of the Mountain," in *Our Mountain Work*, date unknown, Neve Papers; Florence Towles Meadows, "Pocosan Mission," *Our Mountain Work*, date unknown, Neve papers; Whittle, Makeley Diary Transcription, Neve Papers, Box 1.

⁷¹ Charles L. Perdue, "To Build a Wall Around These Mountains: The Displaced People of Shenandoah," *The Magazine of Madison County History* 49, (1991): 49

⁷² Stoneberger, *Memories*, 51; Personal communication with Ruth Ann Stoneberger McKahan

⁷³ Bluegrass: A History, 21-22

Bela Lam and the Greene County Singers provide a good example of how family musical traditions evolved into present day folk and bluegrass music. Born in Page County as Zanddervon Beliah Lam, Bealy as he was known, married Rose Meadows and raised a son, Alva, in Jollet Hollow, on the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge, across from Lewis Mountain. Owning a farm and mill was his main focus, but he eventually organized the family into a quartet with his brother-in-law Paul, and occasionally played at church events, Sunday school and other local gatherings. Bealy played the banjo while the others sang, commonly singing music that was of the local religious tradition including “Tell It Again,” and “Glory Bye and Bye.” The group was asked to record with Okeh Records of Richmond twice, once in 1927 and again in 1929. By 1930, Bealy and his wife had moved to the Stanardsville District of Greene County where they purchased 112 acres and had a large 6 room, 28 x 36 foot, metal-roofed frame home. They were widely loved and respected in the area and as John W. Stoneberger noted, “carried on this heritage of the Blue Ridge Mountain music in its finest form.”⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*; “The Family Band,” in Virginia Music Roots An Online Exhibition of the Library of Virginia, Available online, <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/exhibits/rootsmusic/familyband.htm>; Stoneberger, *Memories of a Lewis Mountain man*, 52

Chapter 4. Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow: Where Heaven and Earth Meet

“The mountains seemed forever changing from one gorgeous shade to another as they reached to the pure white clouds. There, truly, Heaven and earth seemed to meet.”⁷⁵

It is the intent of this chapter to provide a detailed description of a circuit hike that connects Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow, drawing on the context provided in the previous chapter. It seeks to give an overview and history, where possible, of the families who lived and farmed the land that the trail passes through as well as denote changes in natural resources and other interesting features along the way. Using a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit, the author gathered coordinates of significant natural and cultural resources, which were plotted in a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) program. This data was combined with other historical features including old road networks, tract ownership boundaries and structure locations to determine the history of existing structures today. In some instances, more information is known than others. It is the hope of the author that people hiking through Shenandoah National Park today will use the guide and appreciate the history of the families and communities that once resided here.

Lewis Mountain

Accessible from a couple parking areas between mile markers 56 and 59 along Skyline Drive, the hike traverses four main trails, the Slaughter Trail, Conway River Road, Pocosin Hollow Trail and Fire Road, and the Appalachian Trail, encompassing approximately 12 miles as shown in Figure 6. The topography of the land ranges from steep ridges to flat, open hollows, including a sizeable river and a number of flowing mountain streams.

Slaughter Trail Mile 0 to 0.8

Beginning at the Slaughter Trail’s intersection with the Appalachian Trail near Skyline Drive, the old fire road is relatively flat and smooth as it gradually descends a few hundred feet to the Devil’s Ditch stream, as shown in Image 9. In the 1930s, the land on the east side of the trail would have been forested with “Bear

⁷⁵ Susan Preston, “Letters to the Blue Ridge Junior Mission Club,” in *Our Mountain Work*, date unknown, manuscript in Neve Papers, Box 2, University of Virginia Special Collections

Oak⁷⁶ and Chestnut Oak, while on the western side there was a heavier concentration of red oak. Owners of tracts on both sides of the trail lived in other counties and but probably used the land for timber production, as suggested by vegetative changes and tract assessments of the area in 1927. White pine and chestnut oak were the most common species until the past couple decades, when black cherry, red maple and hemlock began to grow in greater numbers.⁷⁷ The resin from pine trees was sometimes used as an herbal remedy by mountain residents for killing infections or treating bruises and snake bites. Look for a large concentration of red maple near the trailhead's intersection with Skyline Drive down to the Appalachian Trail.⁷⁸



Image 6. Slaughter Trail descending to Devil's Ditch. Photograph by Author

⁷⁶ Temporary scrub type of oak which commonly grows after heavy cutting or repeated fires in an area. Later, it is replaced by taller oaks and pine. Information on the bear oak is available from <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/shrub/queil/all.html>

⁷⁷ Figure 6 shows a map of the circuit hike from Mile 0 to 1.8; Figures 12-13 shows changes in vegetation from 1941 to 1986

⁷⁸ "Central District," Shenandoah National Park, National Park Service, available from

<http://www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/upload/central.jpg>; Shenandoah National Park Tract Plats. Greene County. Deed Book 24, Folio 157-164. Greene County Courthouse, Stanardsville, VA; Tract Map. Parcels Purchased for Shenandoah National Park. Shenandoah National Park Archives. National Park Service, Luray, VA.; Smith, *Recollections*, 78

Slaughter Trail Mile 0.8 to 1.8

After crossing the Devil's Ditch Stream at mile 0.8, the trail veers onto the lower slopes of Lewis Mountain. This area had been extensively cultivated, forested and inhabited from the early nineteenth century through the 1930s. Much of the land to the northeast of the trail was considered tillable slope, perfect for small subsistence farming and timber production, with much of it forested with red oak.⁷⁹

The Michael Roach home site appears at mile 1.2 and is shown in Image 10. Not much remains of the 50 acre property today, but the house that stood to the right of the trail was a one and a half story, 12 x 26 foot, four room log and shingle covered structure with a shingle roof and supported by a pillar foundation. A 9 x 12 foot frame kitchen extended off the side and an 8 x 12 foot log corn crib would have stood nearby. A spring still flows across the trail, which served as a water source for Michael Roach, his wife Lina and their five children. When the family lived here, the overwhelming majority of the land was considered tillable with the wooded areas populated by red oak. Today, much of the red oak forest has been taken over by chestnut and white oaks, but patches of basswood, white ash and sugar maple can be spotted by the careful eye.⁸⁰

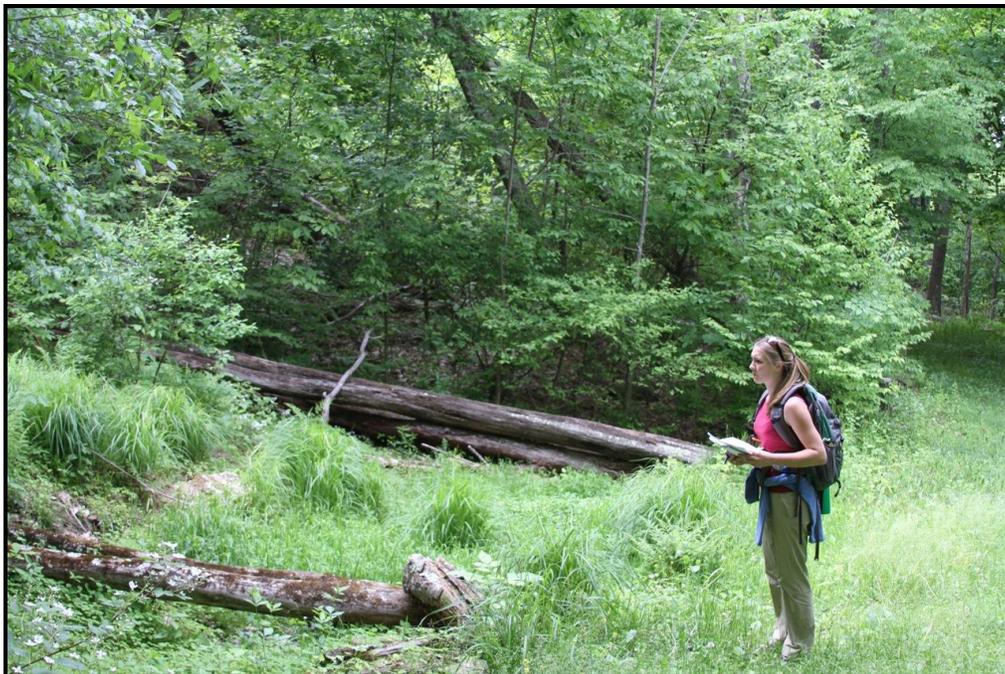


Image 7. Author standing on Slaughter Trail looking west toward Michael Roach home site. Photograph by Scott Rimm.

⁷⁹ Figure 6 shows a map of the circuit hike from Mile 0 to 1.8; Figures 12-13 shows changes in vegetation from 1941 to 1986

⁸⁰Engle and Janney, *Database for Shenandoah National Park Land Records*; Shenandoah National Park Tract Plats, Greene County; Vegetation Cover, GIS data, 1941-1986, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park.

The rolling path continues through a densely wooded oak forest to an abandoned road at mile 1.8. At this point the Slaughter Trail curves to the left, but it is easy to mistake the path as going straight. The land surrounding the Slaughter Trail between mile 1.5 and 2.0 was owned by the John Scott and Cora Virginia Roach family. The property was largely cleared, open grassland with some patches of red oak in the outer extremities, when the Roach family lived here. Visiting Lewis, or Roche's Mountain, as it was often called in June 1916, missionary Susan Preston commented that the area was "a beautiful green pasture field where daisies grew and cattle grazed about." When surveyors assessed the land in the late 1920s, they found thirty head of cattle grazing there as well. The Roaches raised at least ten children here, several of them going on to pursue careers outside the mountain community including education and nursing. Their daughter, Elizabeth Bernice Stoneberger Deane is shown at her graduation from nursing school in Image 11.⁸¹



Image 8. Elizabeth Bernice Stoneberger Deane at her graduation from nursing school.
Photo courtesy of Ruth Ann Stoneberger McKahan

⁸¹ *Our Mountain Work*, June 1916.

In the 1930s, a one and a half story, 17 x 39 foot, seven room, log and frame home with a shingle roof stood not too far from the Slaughter Trail. A full cellar ran the length of the house and two exterior stone chimneys stood, one to heat a living area and another to heat the extended kitchen. A barn measuring 40 x 40 feet stood nearby as well as four other outbuildings including a frame spring house and log hen house and corn crib. Image 12 shows the wood fenced family cemetery, which was just south of the house along an abandoned road. The location of the Roche Mountain Mission, no longer visible today, was close to here. Today not much is left of the homestead except for the crumbling foundation and portions of the stone chimney. Image 13 shows one of the collapsed chimneys. Much of the family's former land has been repopulated with oaks, but some concentrations of black cherry and maple can be seen from the trail at mile 1.8.⁸²



Image 9. The family cemetery, south of the house, looking west. Photograph by author.

⁸² Shenandoah National Park Tract Plats, Greene County; Tract Map, Parcels purchased for Shenandoah National Park, Greene County; Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*; Cora Virginia Roach Tract Assessment, Greene County, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park, Luray, VA; John W. Stoneberger, *Memories of a Lewis Mountain Man*. (Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, 1993), 4.



Image 10. A view south toward one end of the John Scott and Cora Virginia Roach homestead, showing a collapsed chimney. Photograph by Bradley Kendall

Slaughter Trail 1.8 to 3.0

Leaving the abandoned road, the Slaughter Trail begins a gradual descent for the next half a mile or so. Between miles 2.2 to 2.6, one will note red blazes, which denote the Rapidan Wilderness Management Area, owned by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Matthew Taylor and his wife Rosa owned 374 acres spreading across the steep mountain and down into the valley of the Devil's Ditch below. Some of this land was deeded to them by the heirs of Pemberton Lamb in 1904. They gathered additional acreage by purchasing land from various others between 1909 and 1918, including Rosa's brother and sister-in-law Edgar and Nancy Lamb.⁸³

Matthew and Rosa raised nine children here in a one and a half story, 16 x 28 foot, five room log structure with two exterior stone chimneys. A log walled barn with a shingle roof stood nearby, measuring 10 x 12 feet. Other outbuildings included an 8 x 10 foot log corn crib and a 9 x 10 foot log hen house. According to a 1927 tract assessment, the family had tenants living on their property in a one and a half story, 12 x 23 foot, three room log house, with a 7 x 17 foot porch in the front, supported by a pillar foundation. The 1920 and 1930

⁸³ Figure 8 shows a map of the circuit hike from Mile 1.8 to 4.1; Figures 13-14 show changes in vegetation from 1941 to 1986

population censuses suggest that Harrison and Fannie Taylor resided on Matthew and Rosa's property. They would have had their own log barn measuring 14 x 21 feet, along with a corn and hen house.⁸⁴

At the time the Taylor families resided here, much of the upper slopes in this area were red and chestnut oak, while the lower area around Devil's Ditch held cove hardwoods. Today, much of the area is still chestnut oak, although the reforestation of yellow poplar has begun to dominate some of this area. Some evidence of the Taylor family occupation of this area still remains today. Numerous piles of rocks testify to the necessary field clearance in order to farm the land. Rock walls may have delineated property on either side of the road.

Additionally, a rock walled mountain spring stands on the Taylor property, not far from the trail. Image 14 and 15 show the rock piles and mountain spring still visible today.⁸⁵



Image 11. Rock piles found on former Matthew Taylor property off the Slaughter Trail, Lewis Mountain. Photo by Bradley Kendall.

⁸⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census. Federal Census Population Schedules, 1920-1930. Stanardsville District, Greene County, Virginia, available from <http://www.ancestry.com>; Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*; Matthew Taylor Tract Assessment, Greene County, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park.

⁸⁵ Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*; Tom Floyd, *Lost Trails and Forgotten People: The Story of Jones Mountain*, (Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, 2004)__; U.S. Bureau of the Census. Federal Census Population Schedules, 1990-1930. Stanardsville District, Greene County, Virginia, available at <http://www.ancestry.com>; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Agricultural Census 1850-1880, Stanardsville, Greene County, Virginia, available at <http://www.ancestry.com>; U.S. Geological Survey. Fletcher quadrangle, Virginia [map], 1:24,000, 7.5 Minute Series, Washington, D.C.: USGS, 1999; U.S. Geological Survey, Madison quadrangle, Virginia [map] 1:62,500, 15 Minute Series, Washington, D.C.; 1933; Vegetation Cover, GIS Data, 1941-2005.



Image 12. Stone walled mountain spring off the Slaughter Trail on Lewis Mountain.
Photo by Bradley Kendall.

Continuing further down the mountain, the trail levels out before its dramatic and rocky descent down the mountain, passing through a mixture of chestnut oak and poplar trees. At mile 2.9 on the left side of the trail is the next home site, that of James and Carrie Lamb. All that remains today of the home is a crumbling foundation and chimney, which are difficult to spot through the dense undergrowth in spring and summer. However, when it stood fully intact, the three-room, shingle-roofed, log home measured 16 x 20 feet with two exterior stone chimneys and an attached kitchen measuring 10 x 20 feet. A cellar ran under a portion of the house. About half of the property was open grassland, when the family lived there, with a concentration of

chestnut oak along its slopes. The Lambs had a good sized orchard with 43 apple and 3 peach trees nearby on their 28 acre property.⁸⁶

Just southeast of here, along a feeder stream that ran down the mountain and connected to the Conway River, was the home of Silas and Elizabeth Gurnie Lamb. Image 16 and 17 show photographs of Silas and his wife Elizabeth Gurnie. Silas grew up less than a half mile away on his father, Jerry Lamb's property, which was later sold to Willie Lamb. Silas owned one tract of land outright and on another adjacent property he purchased timber rights for lumber extraction. Purchased in July 1913 from Barbara Geer, Silas owned 44 acres of land, including 30 acres considered tillable slope and a 69-acre orchard. It was here in a two room, one and a half story, 14 x 18 foot log home that the couple raised 12 children, two who died in infancy and one who died in her twenties. Two log stables, an 8 x 12 foot hen house, and a 10 x 12 foot corn crib stood nearby.⁸⁷

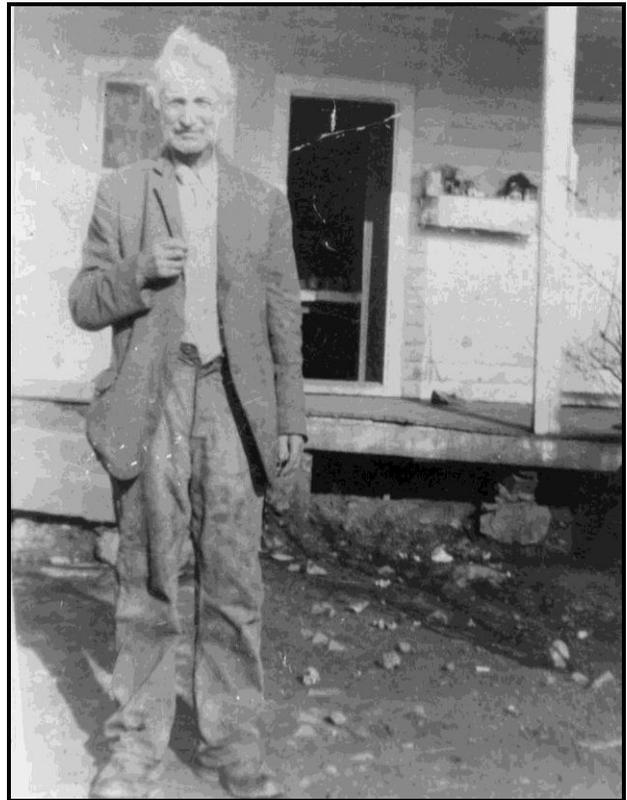


Image 13. Elizabeth Gurnie and her sister-in-law Mary Taylor. Image 14. Silas Lamb.
Dates Unknown. Both images courtesy of William Sullivan.

⁸⁶ James Lamb Tract Assessment, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park; Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*;

⁸⁷ Silas Lamb Tract Assessment, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park; Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Records*; U.S. Geological Survey, Madison quadrangle, Virginia [map] 1:62,500, 15 Minute Series, Washington, D.C.; 1933; Historical Sites and Features, GIS Format, 2010. Maps and Planning Office. Shenandoah National Park, Luray, VA; Personal communication with William Sullivan via email.

Slaughter Trail 3.0 to Conway River at mile 4.1

Leaving the James Lamb home site, one will pass other evidence of settlement and land cultivation. Rock fences along the trail often delineated property lines. Rock piles which stand further downhill from the trail are evidence of land cultivation. The soil was often very rocky and in order to grow crops, land owners had to clear the soil and terrace the land. On the right hand side of the trail, note evidence of a partially collapsed, rock-lined former outbuilding. Soon after, the trail begins a steep descent to the Conway River, through a series of sharp switchbacks, swinging through a forest dominated by chestnut oak.⁸⁸

If it has rained recently, you will soon here the rushing waters of the Conway, well before you see it. On both sides of the trail, look for rock terracing and other evidence of settlement, as shown in Image 18. While the forest is now dominated by white pine, most of the land was cleared for grazing and cultivation in the 1930s. At mile 3.8 you reach a trail marker, denoting a river crossing. Continue 0.3 miles along the Conway River Trail until the trail ends at the Conway River.



Image 15. Rock walls lining trail near Conway River. Photograph by Steven Kendall.

⁸⁸ Vegetation Cover, 1986; Figure 7 shows a map of the circuit hike from Mile 1.8 to 4.1; Figures 12-13 show changes in vegetation from 1941 to 1986.

Conway/Middle River Road Mile 4.1 to Mile 5.1

To continue to Pocosin Hollow Trail from here, cross the Conway River where the trail fades away.⁸⁹ Follow the trail to the right as it passes momentarily through private property and turns into a road designated as Route 667, Middle River Road. Continue along Middle River Road to Mile 5.1. At mile 5.1, signs directing one to Pocosin Hollow appear on the right. Follow the trail for about 200 yards to its intersection with the Pocosin Hollow Trail on the left.⁹⁰

Pocosin Hollow

Upon entering Pocosin Hollow, the topography and landscape is dramatically different from the rolling slopes and ridgelines of Lewis Mountain. The rocky, uneven terrain is interspersed with a dense hardwood forest and numerous streams flowing from all directions. A flood in June 1995 was responsible for most of the landscape as it is today. An enormous mud slide occurred along much of the trail's length, wiping it out. Rock slides and downed trees created an obstacle course of sorts along the stream bed and trails.

The flood had a number of consequences for the area. Most of the first 2.5 miles of trail had to be completely rerouted because it was washed out. The area became somewhat dangerous due to the threat of continued rock falls and downed trees during future storms. Lastly, the storm had a significant impact on the historic sites and cultural landscape created by mountain residents. Much of the evidence of mountain settlement in this area has been obscured by rocks, layers of silt and dead and rotting trees. Despite the effects of the flood, one can still find reminders of the Pocosin community and by overlaying historic features with current topography glean an understanding of what the community looked like in its heyday.⁹¹

⁸⁹ At some times of the year, the river will be too high to ford. Entering Pocosin Hollow from Pocosin Hollow Fire Road off of Skyline Drive at between Miles 59 and 60 will be necessary.

⁹⁰ Figure 8 shows a map of the circuit hike from Mile 4.1 to 6.1

⁹¹ Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, "Trail Club Members Assist in Madison County Cleanup," available online, <http://www.patc.us/history/archive/flood.html>

Pocosin Hollow Trail Mile 5.2 to 6.1

The first 0.75-mile section along this trail is private property on both sides. Take care to be respectful of the property owners. After 0.4 miles, look for two houses on the left. Both are set up on a hill. This land was once owned by Parker Shoals and unlike most of the surrounding area, was not condemned for inclusion in Shenandoah National Park. Parker Shoals purchased the land from Lucy J and Will R. Wood in April 1920. Census records indicate he lived either here or nearby with his sister, Ada, from at least 1900 to 1930. He had at least two sons, Wilbur and Otis, most likely with Edna Shiflett, who lived close, but the census never records them living together.⁹²

Based on historical topographic maps and tract assessments, it is possible that the second house once belonged to Parker Shoals. A 1929 topographical map located a house at approximately the same location as current day maps. Additionally, Shoals' tract assessment lists a 21 x 23 foot frame structure, with a shingle and metal roof. In the 1930s, the property was populated with a cove hardwood forest consisting of yellow poplar, sycamore, birch and basswood, much as it is today.⁹³

Continuing along the trail, go through a gate, follow signs for "trail ahead" and re-enter the park briefly at mile 5.7. For the next 800 feet, you are walking through the former property of Mittie Lee Shoals, which stretched beyond the Pocosin Stream to the left and approximately 1,500 feet up the steep slope of the mountain to the right. While this area is outside the park boundaries, most of Mittie Lee's property to the right (north) of the trail was condemned. Mittie purchased this property on 28 March, 1917 from her sister Amelia, nephew Charlie and his wife, Pearly. In 1927, there stood a small, one room 12 x 15 foot log house with a board roof and stone chimneys. The tract assessment states that the house was owner-occupied and census data from 1920 and 1930, places Mittie and her daughter Ada at approximately this location. The rather steep slope up the north

⁹² Figure 9 shows a map of the circuit hike from Mile 4.1 to 6.1; Figures 13-14 show changes in vegetation from 1941 to 1986; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1900-1930, Greene County. Ancestry.com; Parker Shoals Tract Assessment, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park; Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*; Greene County Birth Records, <http://www.klein-shiflett.com/shiflettfamily/PS/greene.html>.

⁹³ U.S. Geological Survey. Fletcher quadrangle, Virginia [map], 1:24,000, 7.5 Minute Series, Washington, D.C.: USGS, 1999; U.S. Geological Survey, Madison quadrangle, Virginia [map] 1:62,500, 15 Minute Series, Washington, D.C.: 1933; Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*; Vegetation Cover, GIS Data, 1941-2005.

side of the property would not have been conducive to farming, but the cove hardwood forest of poplar, black cherry, maple and birch could have been cleared for timber production as an additional income source.⁹⁴

At mile 5.9, use caution when crossing Pocosin Creek for the first of five times. After heavy rainfall, the creek can be hazardous to cross and even impassable. Soon after crossing the stream, look for eastern hemlock trees identified by their short, flat and narrow needle-like leaves which are dark green above and light green below. Hemlock needles would often be brewed into a tea for treating ailments such as colds or fevers. At mile 6.1, the trail re-enters the park for the remainder of the hike.⁹⁵

Pocosin Hollow Trail Mile 6.1 to 7.6

The trail now passes through the former property of Minnie Taylor. Known history of the tract dates to at least 1880 when Davis Lamb acquired 250 acres on 6 March, 1880. The property was later transferred to his daughter Elizabeth as a gift on 5 July, 1880. Minnie Taylor and her husband Preston purchased the former property of her mother Elizabeth on 5 February 1909. Based on the 1927 assessment of her property, there was a one and a half story, 12 x 21 foot log house with three rooms, a shingle roof and post-pillar foundation standing on the tract. The 1910 census shows Minnie and Preston, along with their three young children living in Pocosin Hollow but by 1920, she had moved to the Rapidan District of Madison County. It is likely that after her husband's untimely death before 1920, she left the property and rented it out to tenants.⁹⁶

Continuing along the trail, note the variety of hemlock, basswood, birch and sycamore mixed with yellow poplar species. In the 1930s, much of the land along the stream was left open from logging and in the

⁹⁴ Deed of Sale from Almetta, Charlie and Pearly Shoals to Mittie Lee Shoals, 28 March 1917, Greene County, Virginia, Deed Book 18, page 202. Clerk of the Circuit Court Office, Stanardsville, Virginia; Mittie Lee Shoals Tract Assessment, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park; Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*; Vegetation Cover, GIS Data, 1941-2005.

⁹⁵ Land Owner Resource Centre and Sir Sanford Fleming College, "Extension Notes: Eastern Hemlock," Queens Printer for Ontario, 1995, available online, http://www.lrconline.com/Extension_Notes_English/pdf/hmlck.pdf;

⁹⁶ Figure 10 shows a map of the circuit hike from Mile 6.1 to 8.6; Figures 13-14 show changes in vegetation from 1941 to 1986; Minnie Taylor Tract Assessment, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park; Deed of Gift, Davis Lamb and wife to Elizabeth Lamb, 5 July 1880, Deed Book 6, page 682, Greene County, Virginia, Clerk of the Circuit Court Office, Stanardsville, Va; Deed of Sale, Walter Lamb and wife to Preston Taylor, 5 February 1909, Deed Book 15, page 308, Greene County, Virginia, Clerk of the Circuit Court Office, Stanardsville, Va; Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1910-1930, Greene County. Ancestry.com

process of being reforested. Between mile 6.5 and 6.6 the trail cuts across the Pocosin stream twice.⁹⁷

Approximately 300 feet after the stream crossing, the trail crosses into the former property of Hiram Taylor. He owned a number of land tracts within Pocosin Hollow and along the southern slopes of Lewis Mountain, but this particular one stretched up the mountain to the right side of the trail and down past the stream to the left, encompassing 39 acres. He acquired title to this particular property between 1910 and 1911 from various surrounding property owners including John Scott and Cora Virginia Roach, and Thomas S. and Annie Taylor.⁹⁸

The initial 500 feet winds through a cove and then heads uphill along a sloping ridge. In the 1930s, chestnut oaks dominated the forest, but have largely been taken over today by cove hardwoods such as poplar and sugar maple. As the trail continues uphill, the area to the right would have been open, grazing land but attempts at reforestation began as early as the late 1920s. Far up the mountain slope, tenant farmers once rented a house here. The frame home stood one story tall, was 12 x 22 feet with two rooms, a paper roof and pipe flues for a chimney. It included a cellar, which ran the length of the house. An 8 x 12 log barn and 8 x 12 log corn crib supported the livestock and produce grown here.⁹⁹

At mile 6.8 the trail enters the former property of Robert L. Taylor and begins to descend a slope down to the riverbed. In the 1930s, this area was a hub of activity with numerous road networks leading to homesteads throughout the hollow and up the mountain slopes. While Robert Taylor lived a few miles south of Pocosin Hollow, he had at least two tenant families living on his property. One home was a 15 x 18 foot, two-story frame structure with four rooms, a metal roof, stone foundation and stone chimneys. The second house was slightly smaller, standing one and a half stories tall with two rooms and measuring 12 x 18 feet. A stone foundation supported the frame and log finish, along with two exterior stone chimneys. A number of outbuildings supported the tenant farmers living here, including a 288 square foot barn with a 12 x 6 foot shed, a 8 x 13 foot log corn house with sheds, a 8 x 12 foot hen house and a second smaller log barn. An orchard

⁹⁷ Vegetation Cover, GIS Data, 1941-2005

⁹⁸ Hiram Taylor Tract 17a Assessment, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park; Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*;

⁹⁹ Vegetation Cover, GIS Data, 1941-2005; Hiram Taylor Tract Assessment, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park; Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*;

including 222 apple, one pear and seven cherry trees provided additional produce for home consumption as well as supplemental income by selling surplus fruit at the local market.¹⁰⁰

The first house was located not far from the current day trail before it passes over the Pocasin stream. Today evidence of former inhabitation in the area still remains, including pieces to a wood stove, with the label “Crescent 25.” The piece shown in Image 19 was most likely the top to the burner and Image 20 may have covered the oven door. Less than 50 feet from the wood stove, some sheet metal from an unknown source was located above the ground, as shown in Image 21. Two notched posts stand along an abandoned road on the property and may have marked property lines or fenced in an area for livestock, as shown in Image 22.

At mile 6.9, the trail crosses over the Pocasin stream for the final time before heading up the mountain slopes and into Pocasin Hollow proper. Looking upstream to the right, much of the surrounding land was open grassland in the 1930s due to heavy timber extraction. Today, it has been repopulated with poplar, basswood and sugar maple, among others, as a typical cove hardwood forest. The upper slopes have a higher concentration of chestnut oak. Note the huge rocks and boulders which dot the landscape. When this area was inhabited, mountain residents would often set apples on the rocks to dry in the bright sunlight.¹⁰¹

At mile 7.0 and for the next 0.2 miles, the trail re-enters the land once owned by Hiram Taylor and briefly brushes through the westernmost corner of Minnie Taylor’s property. When you re-enter the Robert L. Taylor land at Mile 7.2, the landscape soon changes to a forest dominated by chestnut oak. Within the next 500 feet, look down the slope of the mountain to the right. About 75 feet below the trail near the river, was once the previously mentioned tenant-occupied homestead on the Robert Taylor property.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ U.S. Geological Survey, Madison quadrangle, Virginia [map] 1:62,500, 15 Minute Series, Washington, D.C.; 1933; Vegetation Cover, GIS Data, 1941-2005; Robert L. Taylor Tract Assessment, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park; Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*;

¹⁰¹ *Our Mountain Work*, 1918; Vegetation Cover, GIS Data, 1941-2005.

¹⁰² U.S. Geological Survey, Madison quadrangle, Virginia [map] 1:62,500, 15 Minute Series, Washington, D.C.; 1933; Vegetation Cover, GIS Data, 1941-2005; Historic Sites and Features, GIS Format, 2010. Maps and Planning Office. Shenandoah National Park, Luray, VA.



Image 16. Part of a wood-burning stove, possibly the top to the burner. Located near abandoned road off of Pocosin Hollow Trail. Photograph by Author.



Image 17. Piece of wood-burning stove, possibly the cover to the oven. Located near abandoned road off of Pocosin Hollow Trail. Photograph by Steven Kendall.



Image 18. Piece of sheet metal located near wood stove remains. Near abandoned road off of Pocosin Hollow Trail. Photograph by Steven Kendall



Image 19. Notched post alongside abandoned road off of Pocosin Hollow Trail. Photograph by Author.

Pocosin Hollow Trail 7.6 to 8.6

At mile 7.6, the trail winds through what was once extract woods owned by the Deford Company for the consumption of bark for leather production. The company owned 577 acres that once consisted of chestnut trees, poplar, red oak and chestnut oaks trees. Chestnut leaves were a popular remedy by mountain families to cure ailments, such as the whooping cough, by boiling the leaves into a tea. By the late 1920s, both timber extraction and the chestnut blight had wiped out all of the chestnut trees. Today, some of the chestnut and red oaks, as well as poplar trees still survive in this area.¹⁰³

While the company owned numerous tracts throughout the Blue Ridge, this particular one was acquired by Thomas Deford of Baltimore, Maryland in the 1890s. Upon his death, the land was passed down to his two sons Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Deford, Jr. Realizing the potential for great profit from lumber extraction in the mountains, Deford moved his company's base to the Shenandoah Valley. On 16 September, 1880 construction of the Deford Tannery in Luray, Virginia began and was completed by August 1882. Having a capacity to produce 1,000 hides per day, Deford was considered the largest tannery in the state, if not in the country. It was even heralded by the *Luray Times* of August 1890 as the "largest in the world."¹⁰⁴

The great production capacity meant that at least 50 tons of bark needed to be ground daily. Local wagon teams, usually employing men from the mountain or just below, would travel back and forth between the extract woods and the tannery to deliver weekly or bi-weekly supplies. By 1900, the Deford Company installed their own bark mill to accommodate such great quantities. Unfortunately the depression of the 1930s, coupled with the loss of their extract woods when their land was condemned for the park, forced the company into a sale through bankruptcy.¹⁰⁵

Two homes located on the Deford property in Pocosin Hollow housed tenants who most likely worked in the extract woods. The first dwelling was a four room, one and a half story, 14 x 18 foot metal-roofed, log and weather-boarded home with stone and brick capped chimneys and a solid, stone foundation. Various

¹⁰³ Figure 10 shows a map of the circuit hike from Mile 6.1 to 8.6; Figures 13-14 show changes in vegetation from 1941 to 1986; *Recollections*, 76; Vegetation Cover, GIS Data, 1941-2005; U.S. Geological Survey, Madison quadrangle, Virginia [map] 1:62,500, 15 Minute Series, Washington, D.C.; 1933; Historic Sites and Features, GIS Format, 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Dan Vaughn, *Luray and Page County Revisited*, Images of America, (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 36.

¹⁰⁵ Vaughn, *Luray and Page County Revisited*, 38

outbuildings including a 16 x 42 foot log and metal roofed barn, 13 x 9 foot log corn crib, log chicken house and log spring house supported the family living here. Another one and a half story log house located much further from the trail measured 16 x 22 feet and included three rooms and a shingle roof. A log meat house, 18 x 20 foot tobacco barn, spring house and log stable provided storage space for these tenants' produce and livestock.¹⁰⁶

Subtle reminders remain today to tell of the once bustling, active woods. At mile 8.3, where the trail extends back to connect to the Pocosin Hollow Fire Road, are remnants of one of the previously mentioned tenant homes. The 1929 topographical map of this area shows that this home was occupied and a comparison to the 1920 census suggests that it was inhabited by the Jack Samuels family. Jack is listed as renting a home along Pocosin Hollow road with his wife Ellie and two young daughters, while working in the “extract woods” as a day laborer in 1920. Property records indicate his brothers and census records verify his brothers Cicero and Panny Samuels lived nearby. Additionally, the Samuels family had a long tradition of living in Pocosin Hollow, dating at least to the early 1800s when Jack’s grandfather Meshach was born in the Hollow.¹⁰⁷

At the intersection after mile 8.3, stay to the right and the trail merges with the Pocosin Hollow Fire Road. About 300 yards after the intersection, the trail enters the former property of Reuben Breeden. Image 23 shows a portion of this trail section. Although Reuben Breeden was listed as the property owner when this land was condemned, some confusion over the true ownership led the state to assess the 100 acres of land to Cicero Samuels. Deed records confirmed that Cicero obtained the tract as a gift on 29 March, 1919 from J.M. Samuels and wife and Ethel and Ashby Turner. Two acres of this property had been given by Cicero’s parents Meshach

¹⁰⁶ Deford Company Tract Assessment, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park; Reed and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*.

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Geological Survey, Madison quadrangle, Virginia [map] 1:62,500, 15 Minute Series, Washington, D.C.; 1933; Historic Sites and Features, GIS Format, 2010; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1910-1930, Greene County, Ancestry.com. Personal Communication with Jean Samuels via email.

and Melissa Ann Samuels,¹⁰⁸ between July 1905 and 1906, to the Episcopal Church for 25 dollars, for the purposes of establishing the Upper Pocosin Mission.¹⁰⁹



Image 20. Pocosin Hollow Fire Road at Mile 8.4. Photo by Steven Kendall.

As the trail approaches mile 8.5, glance to the left. A trail to the left leads past the remnants of the Upper Pocosin Episcopal Mission, including the mission workers' home and the chapel, which still stand. The two room frame house closest to the trail, which housed the Towles sisters, is shown in Image 24. In front of the house, an earthen depression is visible in Image 25. Here, the clothing bureau once stood, which supported the local families in need. Walking further down the trail, remains of the stone chapel become more visible. The stone steps shown in Image 26, and portions of the stone foundation and chimney shown in Image 27 are all that remain today of the chapel. To the right, a cemetery holds the graves of at least eight former members of the Pocosin Hollow community.

¹⁰⁸ Various sources report different spellings of the names Meshack (including Mecale, Michael and Mechach) and Melissa (Milisian). The names Meshack and Melissa appear to be most common and easily identifiable.

¹⁰⁹ Reuben Breeden Tract Assessment, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park; Davison, *Frederick W. Neve*, 119; Personal communication with Jean Samuels via email.



Image 21. Remains of Mission Workers' Home in Pocosin Hollow at Mile 8.5.
Photograph by author.



Image 22. Depression in the ground where the clothing bureau once stood.
Photograph by author.



Image 23. Stone steps which once supported the massive stone frame of the Upper Pocosin Mission Chapel. Photograph by author.

Around the turn of the 20th century, the area around the mission was flat, open grassland, used for grazing and farming purposes. Behind the cemetery, the Samuels family home once stood, a 16 x 20 foot, three room log house, with a shingle roof. A large, 16 x 45 foot log and frame barn along with eight other outbuildings and an orchard with 32 fruit trees once stood nearby. Reforestation efforts began as early as the late 1930s and by the 1980s, the entire area was covered with chestnut oak. Today, the area around the mission also has a concentration of black cherry, red maple and white ash.¹¹⁰

Pocosin Hollow Trail 8.6 to Slaughter Trail

Approximately 300 yards after turn off for South River Trail, the Pocosin Hollow Fire Road enters former property of Sally and Luther Kite. Figure 10 shows a map of this trail section. The Kite property extended from the top of the Blue Ridge down to Pocosin Run and included 448 acres, 24 of them on the Rockingham County side of the mountain. The Kites resided on the Rockingham County side where they

¹¹⁰ Figure 11 shows a map of the circuit hike from Mile 8.6 to 9.6; Figures 13-14 shows changes in vegetation from 1941 to 1986; Vegetation Cover, GIS Data, 1941-2005; Reuben Breeden Tract Assessment, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park;

owned and operated a two-pump gas station. Much of the Kite tract timber was extensively cut in the early 1900s for staves, tanbark and lumber. As of the 1927 tract assessment, there were still at least five mill sites visible on the property.¹¹¹



Image 24. Outline of foundation and partial chimney of Upper Pocasin Mission.
Photograph by author.

¹¹¹ Sally A. Kite Tract Assessment, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park; Engle and Janney, *Database of Shenandoah National Park Land Records*;

The Kites had at least two tenants living on their property, one of which was Preston Breeden, his mother, aunt and two brothers. The family lived in a one-story, three room frame house, which eventually had two separate buildings connected by a porch, one being 16 x 18 feet and the other 12 x 15 feet. An oral interview with Preston Breeden testified that this addition of a second building was added as a later date with an additional three rooms.¹¹²

The site of the Breeden homestead is now occupied by the Pocosin Cabin, which was constructed in 1937 by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, at mile 9.6 and seen in Image 28. Their home would have been adjacent to the cabin, in the foreground of the photograph. The Breeden family lived here for at least 20 years. During this time, most of the land surrounding their cabin was open and cleared, “all pretty blue grass sod.” The family grew most everything they needed, with the exception of kerosene lamps, oil and flour, which they would purchase at the nearby Fletcher store. They raised milk cows, hogs and chickens for home consumption. For some extra income, they would sometimes haul staves and barrels to the Towel Barrel Factory in Baltimore for ten cents per hour or pick chestnuts for 25 cents a gallon. The family was forced to watch their home being torn down by members of the Conservation Civilian Corps in 1938 and later they “burnt all of it up.”¹¹³

Just after passing the present day Pocosin Cabin, at mile 9.6 the Pocosin Hollow Fire Road intersects with the Appalachian Trail and the cabin is seen from the trail in Image 29. Make a right on the trail and follow for the next 2.8 miles. Although the Appalachian Trail was not constructed here until the early 1930s, but provides an ideal location to view Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow from above. In the early 1900s, this area would have been mostly cleared for grazing and timber extraction.

¹¹² Preston Breeden, interview by Garvey et al, 19 November 1982 in Pocosin Hollow, Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection; Kite Tract Assessment, Maps and Planning Office, Shenandoah National Park.

¹¹³ Figure 12 shows a map of the circuit hike from Mile 9.6 to the end; Figures 13-14 show changes in vegetation from 1941 to 1986; Preston Breeden, interview by Garvey et al, 19 November 1982 in Pocosin Hollow, Shenandoah National Park Oral History Collection



Image 25. Pocosin Shelter, Central Section. Shenandoah National Park. Photographer: Abbie Rowe, n.d. From PATC Archives' Photograph Collection "Places - Pocosin Cabin"

From the present day location of Lewis Mountain Campground, looking down the mountain slope today is mostly obscured with a forested chestnut oak cover. However, in the early 1900s one would have been able to see down the mountain to the Roach cabin and the Slaughter Trail. A mission worker named Frank Persons who stood close to this spot in 1916 exclaimed, "There in that spot which was bathed in the cool breezes that swept from the valley, I saw and felt inspired by the scenery of the place. Down below could be seen the cabin home of the mountaineer for whom the mountain was named and not far away was his grave. There too, the little mission school, for which he had so earnestly appealed in his last day, could be seen." The mission worker later resided at the Roach homestead while working to establish the Roche's Mountain Mission. Persons must have felt a great deal of inspiration from the beauty of the area. ¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Our Mountain Work, June 1916; Vegetation Cover, GIS Data, 1941-2005



Image 26. Pocosin Cabin, 1941. [photographer unknown], 1941. From PATC Photograph Collection "Places - Pocosin Cabin"

Continuing along the trail, a turn off at mile 12.3 leads quickly to the Bearfence Mountain Shelter, a lean-to style shelter built in the late 1930s or early 1940s by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club for thru hikers backpacking the Appalachian Trail. Finally, at mile 12.4 the trail reconnects with the beginning at the Slaughter Trail.

Conclusion: A Look to the Future

“To take my soul to rest hope they will find it in the park...when the people out of the cities come to see the beauties of the park”¹¹⁵

Since its creation 75 years ago, generations of visitors have indeed come out “to see the beauties of the park.” Even the author of *Memories of a Lewis Mountain Man*, John W. Stoneberger, worked as a member of the Civilian Conservation Corps and frequently visited the park and Skyline Drive until his death in 1993. A photograph of him on Skyline Drive in the mid-1900s is shown in Image 30. Through the years, dramatic reforestation efforts led to a wilderness designation for the park in the 1980s. Landscape manipulation through the creation of Skyline Drive, overlooks, parking lots and campgrounds has significantly detracted from the cultural landscape created by the mountaineers. And yet, there are subtle, if not blatant reminders, along each trail, within each hollow and along the ridges of each mountain, which remain as a tribute to the persistence, determination and resilience of the mountain people and their communities.

As time takes its toll on the cultural resources associated with mountain settlement, however, above ground resources will continue to decay and deteriorate. It is imperative that park officials take steps to preserve the remaining historic fabric on the landscape. Shenandoah National Park’s budgetary concerns suggest that stabilization of the remaining unprotected resources is highly unlikely and improbable. Therefore, the author makes a number of recommendations concerning an alternative means of preservation.

First, the park should undertake a cultural landscape survey of the entire park, by district, to include all resources accessible from established and maintained trails. Using a Global Positioning Systems Unit (GPS), all cultural resources associated with the period of mountain settlement, approximately 1830-1930 should be identified, targeted with coordinates, photographed and assessed for their integrity and significance. Cultural resources relating to this period include, but are not limited to home sites with at least partial foundations or chimneys remaining, structural remains relating to religious or educational institutions, outbuildings, areas of

¹¹⁵ Susan Preston, “Letters to the Blue Ridge Junior Mission Club,” in *Our Mountain Work*, date unknown, manuscript in Neve Papers, Box 2, University of Virginia Special Collections

rock clearance or rock-lined walls, stone-lined springs or wells, and various artifacts ranging from automobiles to steam engine parts.¹¹⁶

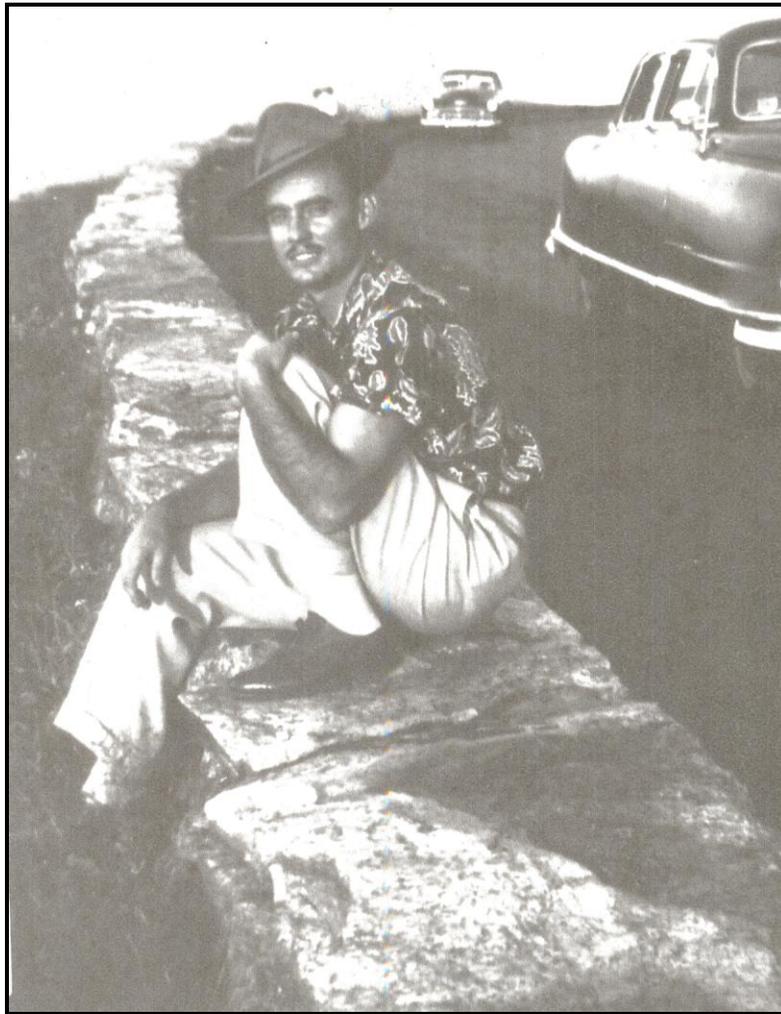


Image 27. John W. Stoneberger on Skyline Drive, circa 1950.
Courtesy of Ruth Ann Stoneberger McKahan

Second, the park should compile the information acquired in these surveys and evaluate resources with high levels of integrity and, or significance. Alternative means of interpretation for these sites could include textual panels at the trailhead, along the trail or near the resource that describe the history of land use and purpose of the resource. Wayside exhibits along Skyline Drive and at various overlooks should discuss the

¹¹⁶ In 2007, the National Park Service provided funding to the Olmstead Center for a Cultural Landscape Inventory of the Appalachian Trail Corridor through the Central District of the park. This project assessed the condition of resources as well as whether they were contributing or non-contributing resources to the significance of Shenandoah National Park. This can and should be used as a baseline for future landscape studies. See, Cultural Landscapes Inventory: Appalachian Trail –Central District, Shenandoah National Park. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Shenandoah National Park, 2007.

history behind the overlooks' names, the families that lived below these overlooks and land use within the area. Brochures for trails with resources of significance and interest should be created and distributed at the park entrances, service centers and visitor centers.

Public memory has begun to reshape the history of mountain settlements based on recent interpretive revisions undertaken by Shenandoah National Park. A film, *The Gift*, shown on request at Byrd Visitor Center now dedicates a substantial portion of time to the topic of mountain culture, incorporating photographs, video footage and oral testimony from mountain residents. The new interpretive exhibit installed in 2007 details eight families, one from each county within the park boundaries, showing a tract assessment of their property and a photograph of the family. It displays artifacts collected from various archaeological sites to demonstrate the resourcefulness of mountain settlers, their interaction with local and regional economic networks and their participation in mass consumer culture, arguing that they were not isolated or backward, as once suggested.

Interest in mountain culture has sparked numerous publications by local authors on cultural resources in the park. These books are promoted by Shenandoah National Park and sold within the park and by their non-profit partner, Shenandoah National Park Association. Potomac Appalachian Trail Club which manages numerous cabins and oversees trails within the park also leads trail and bushwhack hikes dedicated to cultural resource history. Furthermore, county historical societies display material related to mountaineer culture to interest researchers and visitors.

Renewed interest in mountain culture is beginning to take shape in the coming months as part of the park's 75th anniversary celebration. Byrd Newspapers is in the process of interviewing individuals from each county and many are descendants of former Blue Ridge residents. Recently on November 5, 2010, the park launched its 75th campaign on McCormick Gap Overlook near Afton Mountain which included tribute by local descendants, past superintendents and other affiliated individuals. (Shenandoah National Park Association 2010) In the coming months, symposiums on pressing issues in the park and a rededication ceremony in June 2011 are planned and will hopefully feature a focus on the mountain communities.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Personal Communication from members of 75th Anniversary Committee.

The spirit of the mountain people will be forever entrenched in the landscape, regardless of efforts to alter it. It is here that many lived out their lives and were buried. They walked along the same roads we now consider trails. They drank from and fished in the same streams and rivers which provide visitors such enjoyment today. With their hands, they built sturdy homes of frame, log and stone and their fingerprints still remain. Susan Preston, a missionary living in Pocosin during the early 1900s, commented on the remarkable beauty of the area,

“Nothing could be more strangely beautiful than all this, it seemed –and yet, there is the late evening when the sun sheds its last soft rays and then the mountains seem to lose their height and loom more closely together, until they look like great waves of the ocean flowing close beneath the sky. Then, as night draws nigh, through the rising fog in the valley comes the road of the mountain stream, the tinkling of cow bells, and now and then a loud “whoop” from a mountaineer. One by one the stars appear, and one by one the whippoorwills begin their weird songs.”¹¹⁸

If you listen very closely, perhaps you can still hear their loud whoops rise above the whippoorwills’ songs today.

¹¹⁸ Preston, Life in Pocosin Hollow, unpublished manuscript

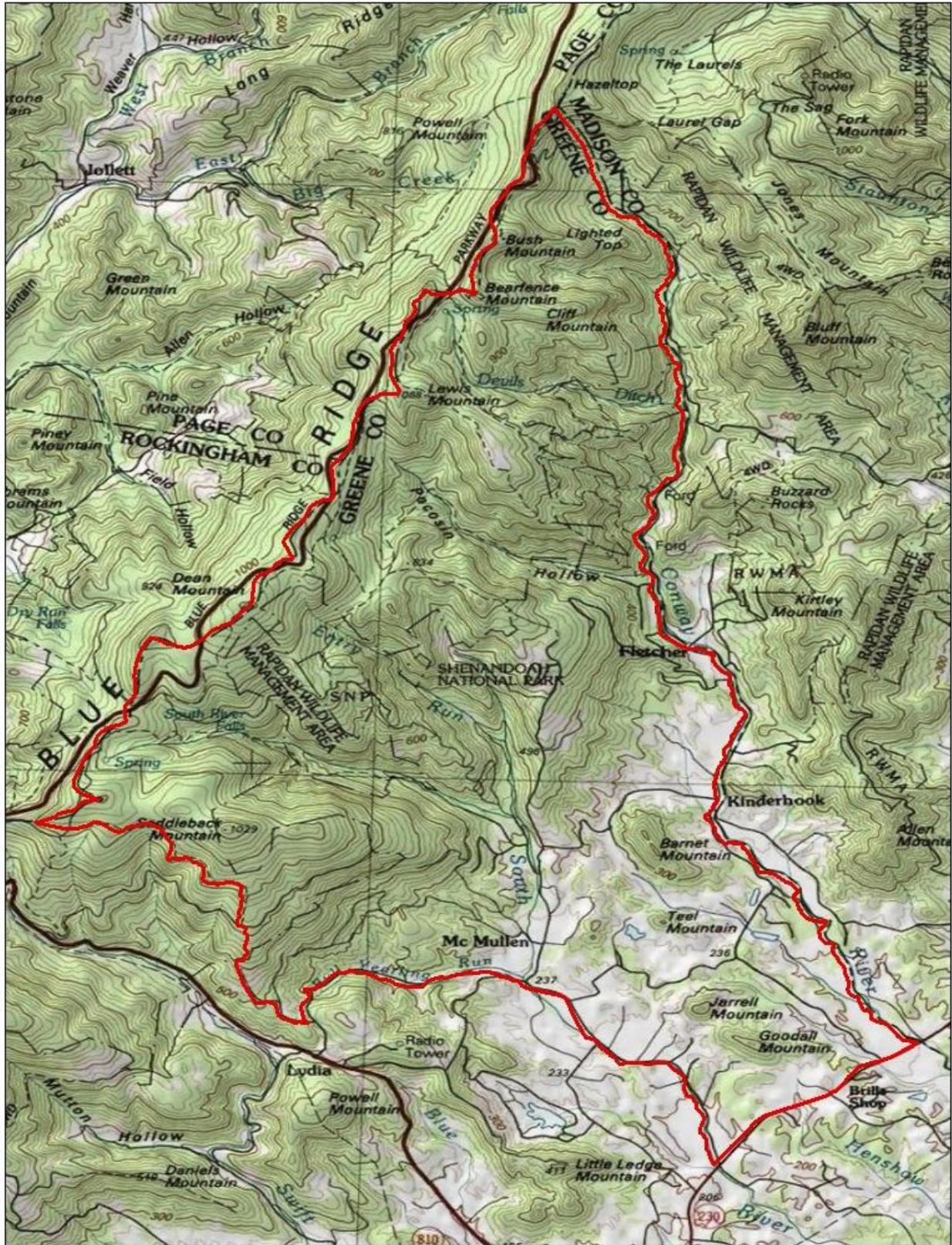


Figure 1. Boundaries of Stanardsville Census Enumeration District No. 6, 1930.

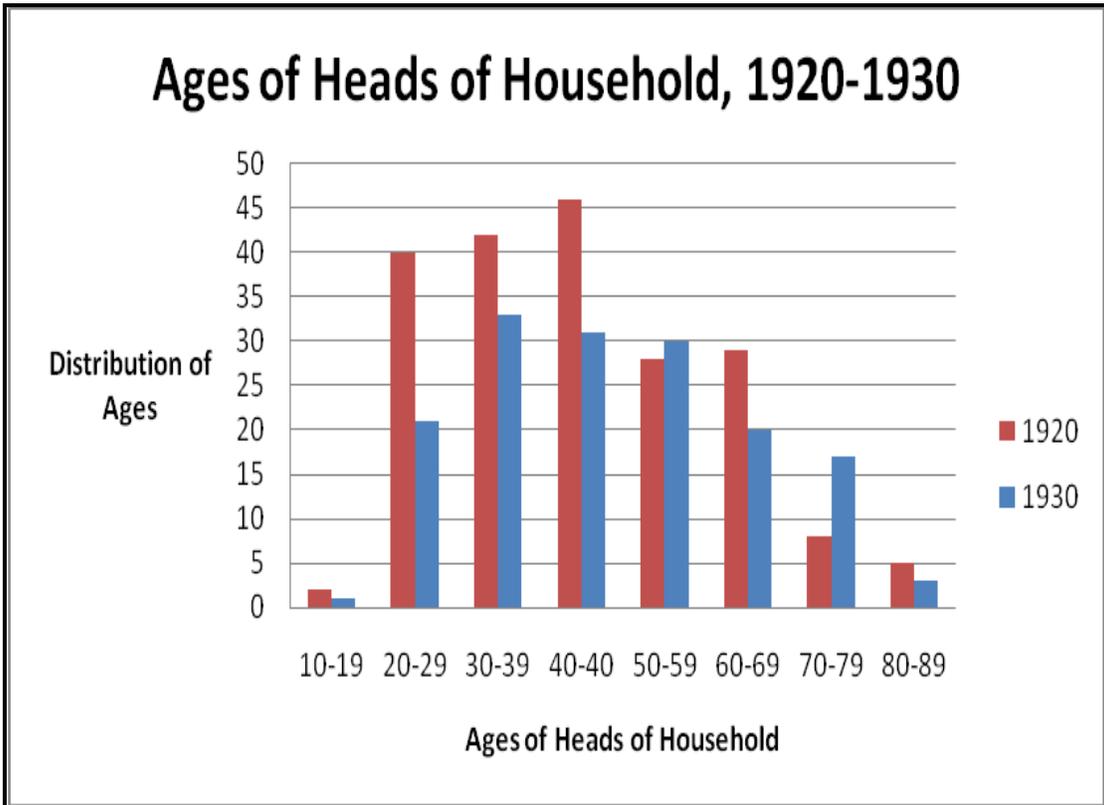


Figure 2. Changes in Ages of Heads of Household between 1920 and 1930

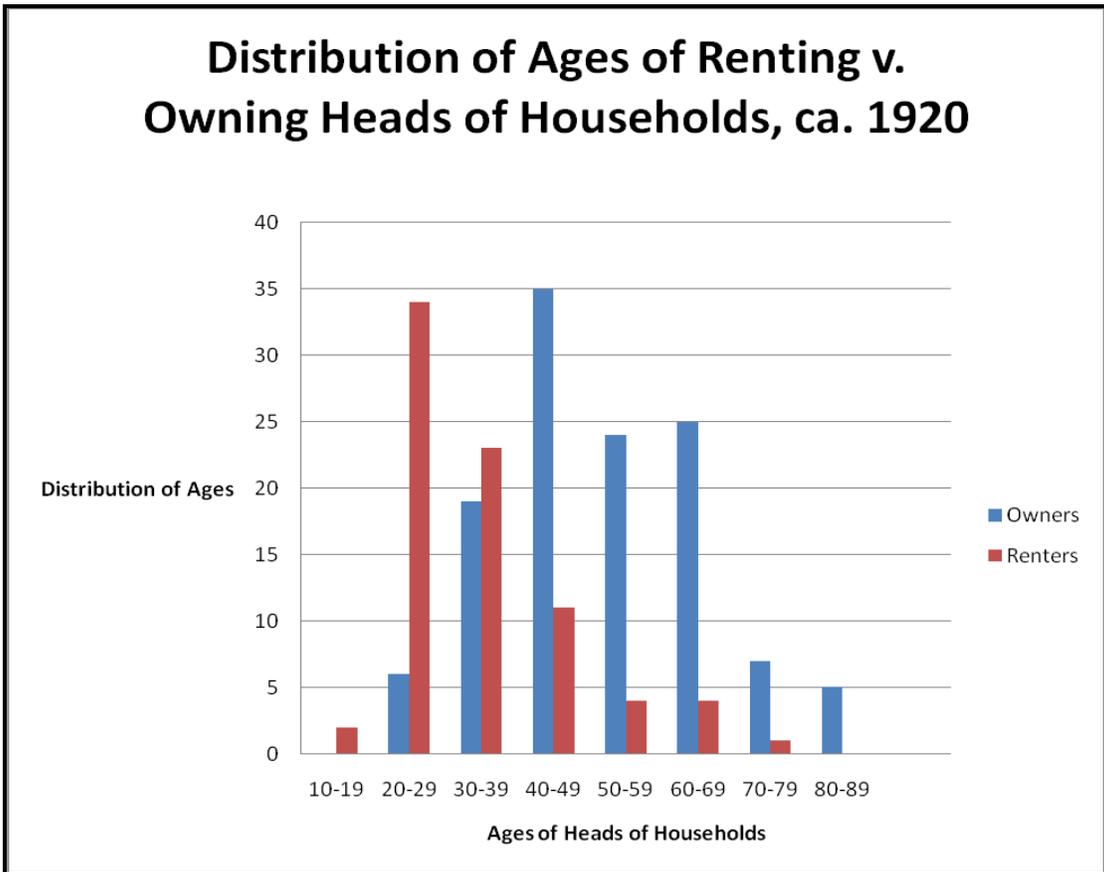


Figure 3. Distribution of Ages of Renting v. Owning Heads of Household, 1920

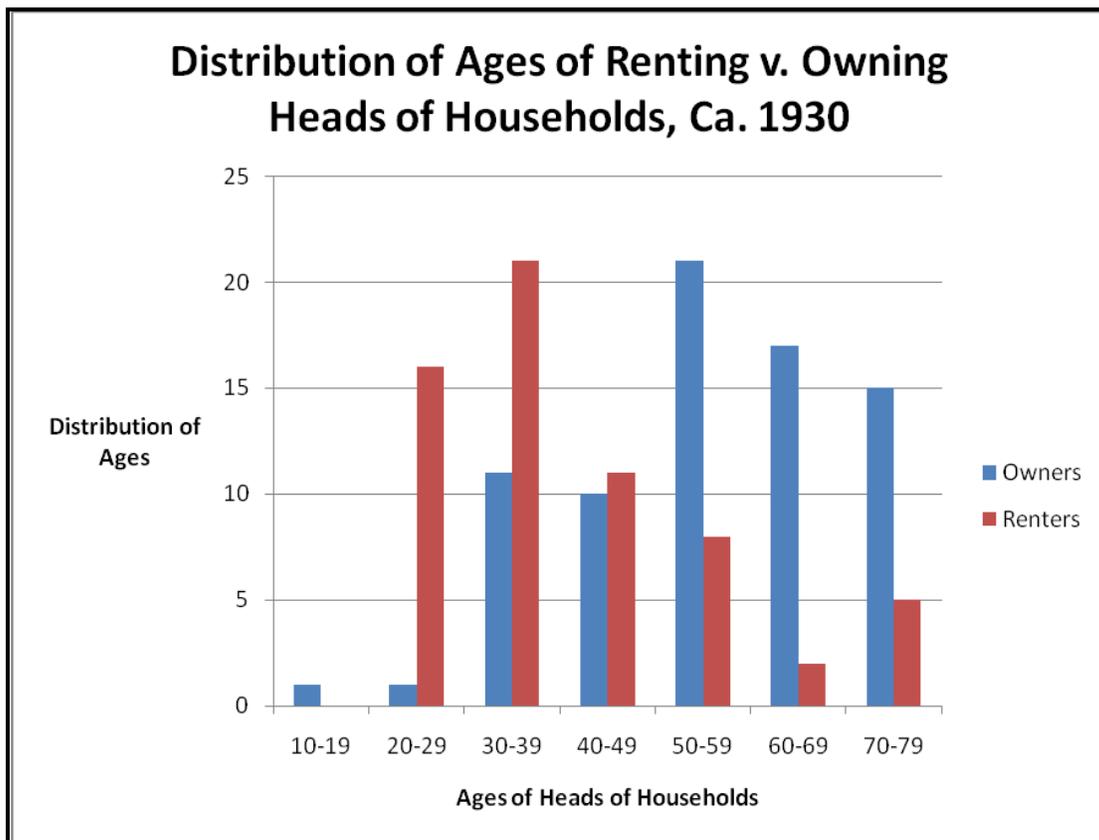


Figure 4. Distribution of Ages of Renting v. Owning Heads of Household, 1930

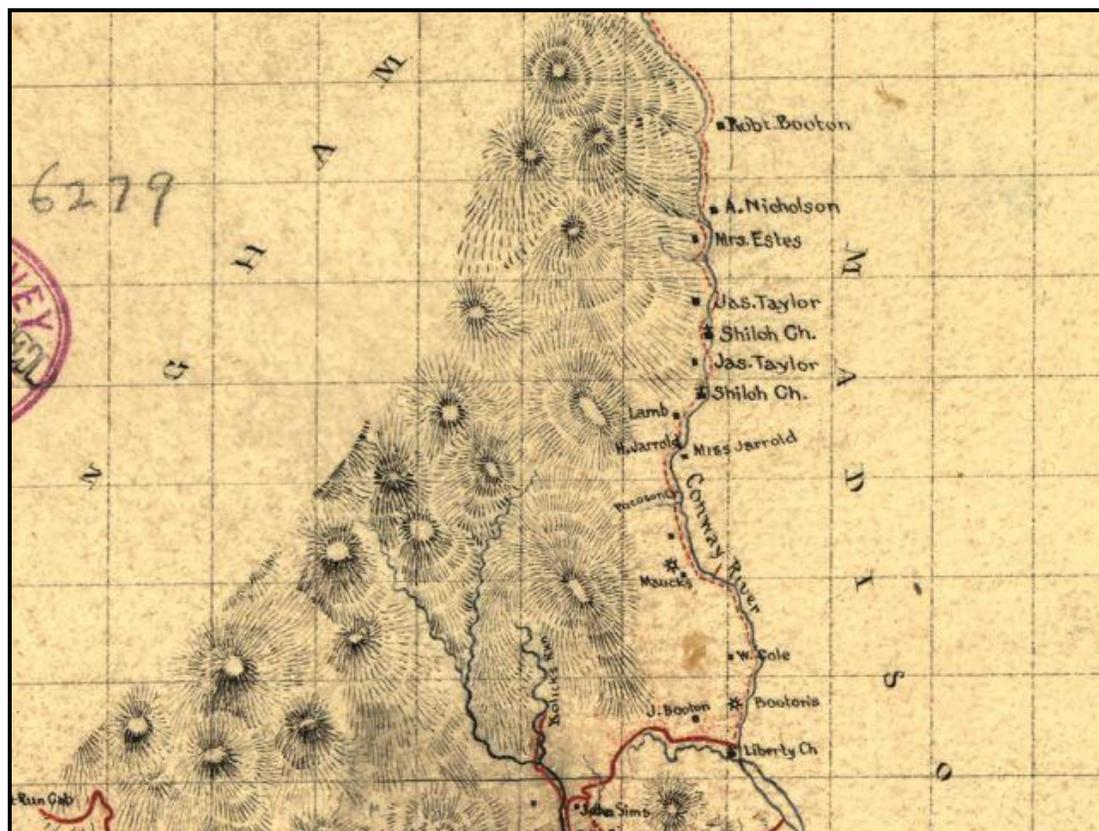


Figure 5. Early landowners east and west of the Conway River in Greene County, Va. Confederate States of America. Army of Northern Virginia. Corps, 2nd. Engineer Office, 1863. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division

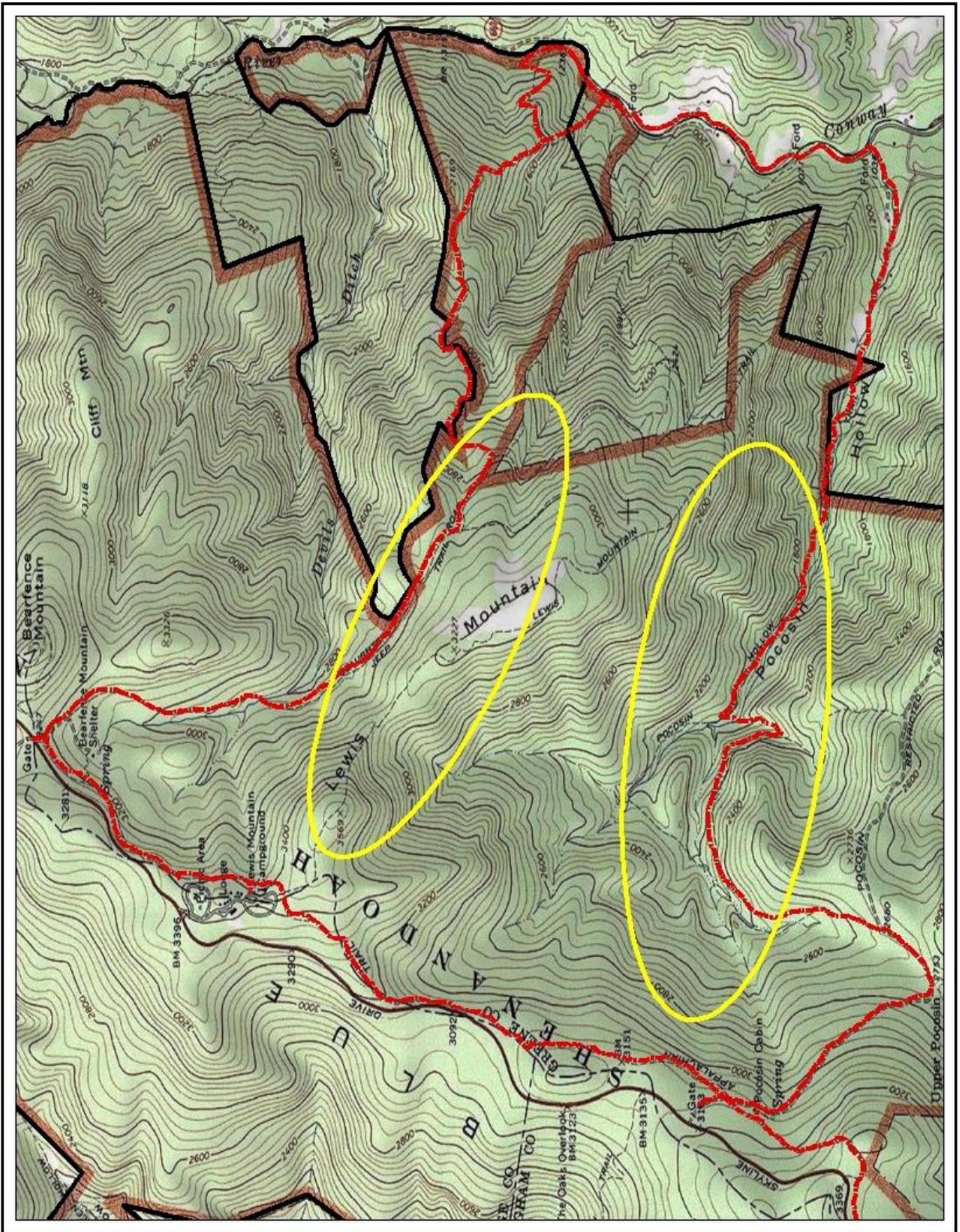


Figure 6. Map of the Case Study Area, showing the circuit hike in red with Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow highlighted in yellow.

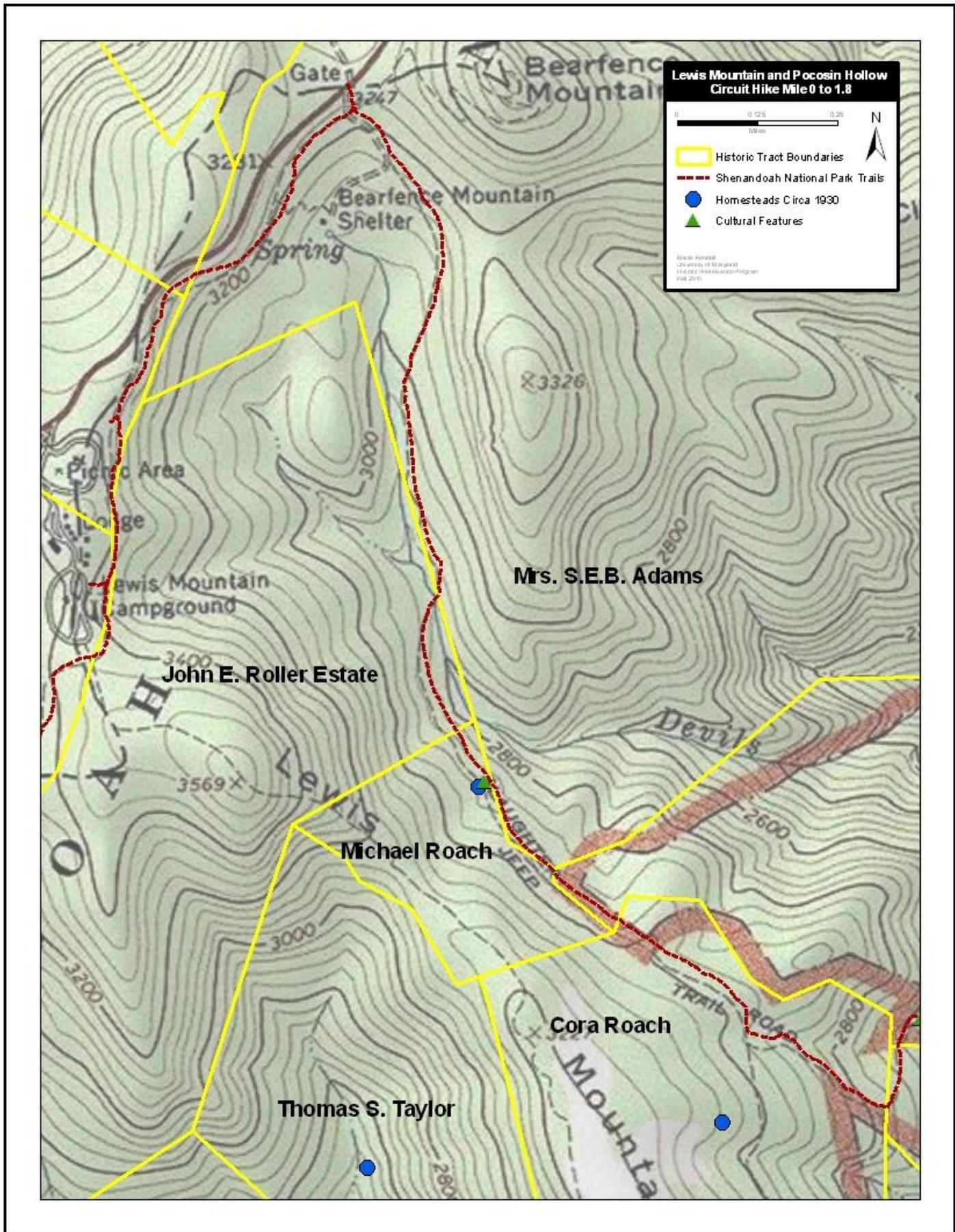


Figure 7. Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow Circuit Hike, Showing Mile 0 to 1.8

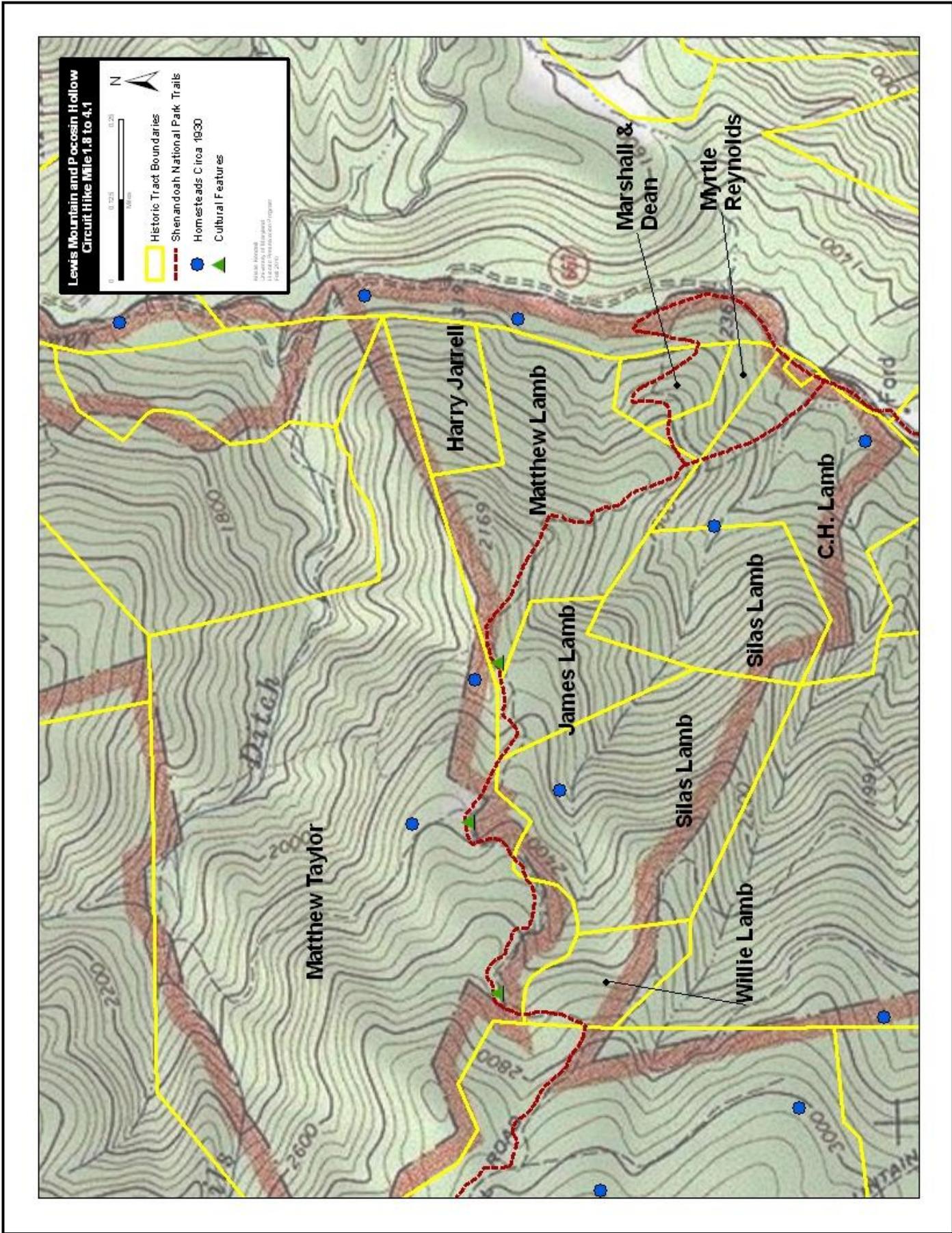


Figure 8. Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow Circuit Hike, Showing Mile 1.8 to 4.1

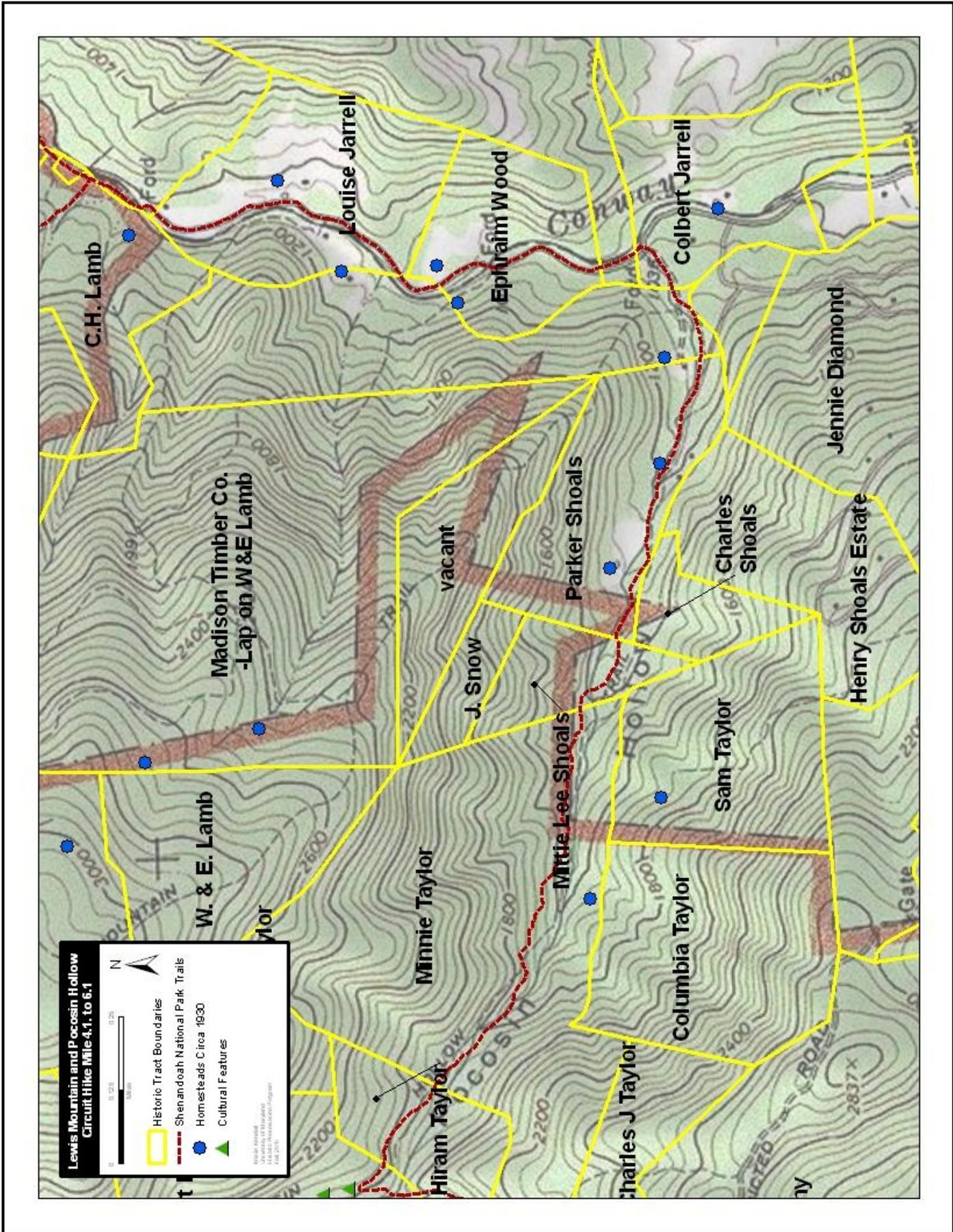


Figure 9. Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow Circuit Hike, Showing Mile 4.1 to 6.1

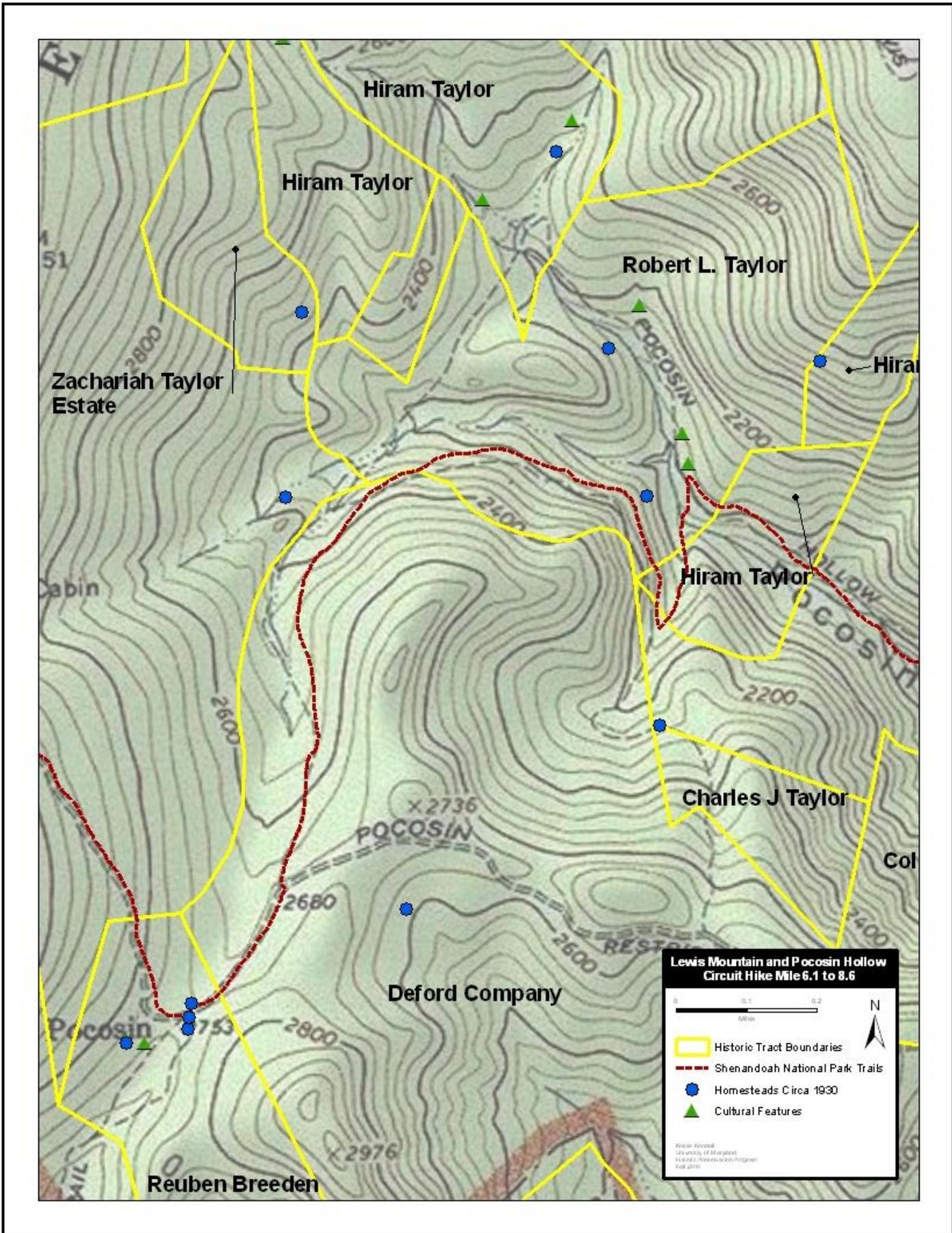


Figure 10. Lewis Mountain and Pocasin Hollow Circuit Hike, Showing Mile 6.1 to 8.6

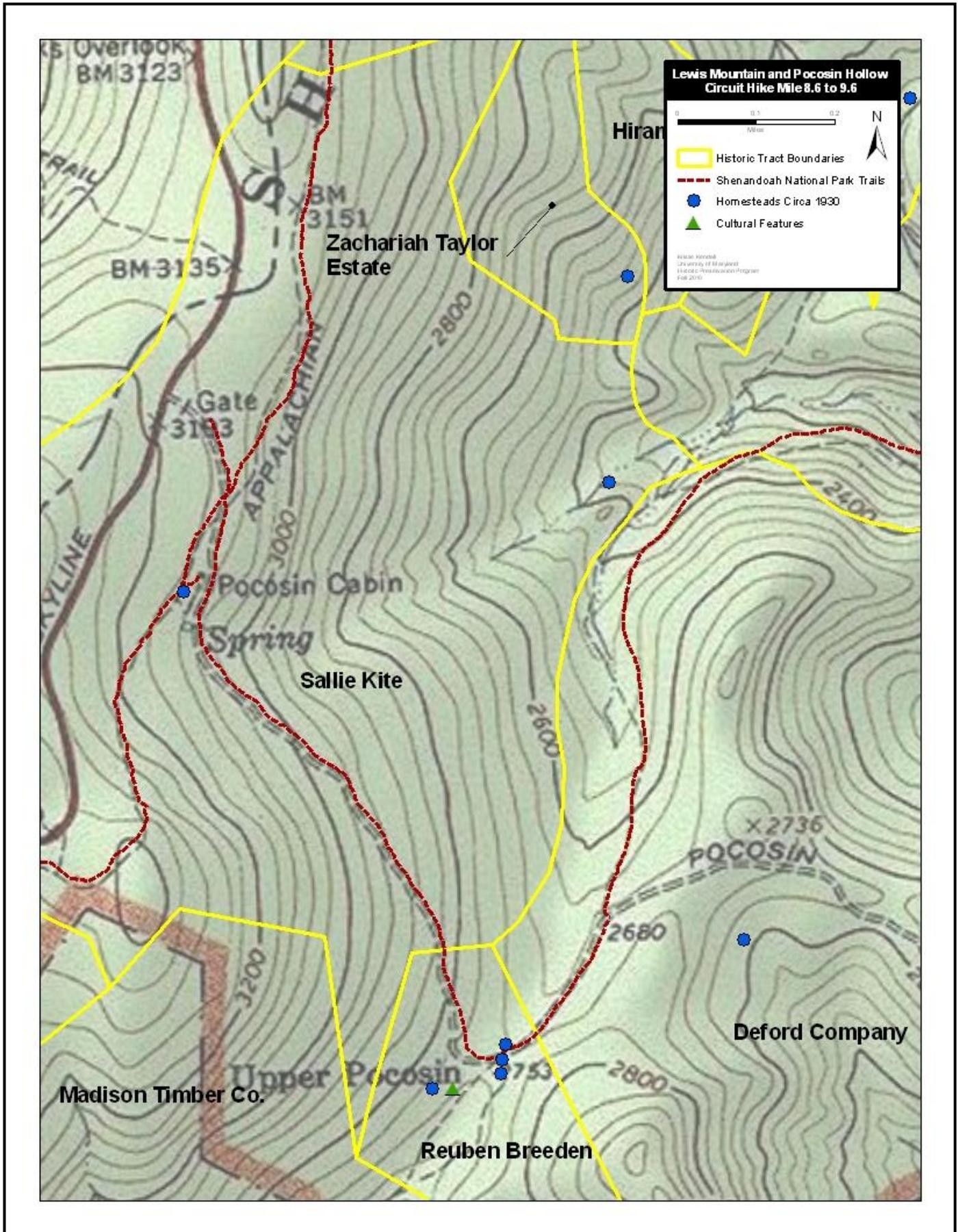


Figure 11. Lewis Mountain and Pocasin Hollow Circuit Hike, Showing Mile 8.6 to 9.6

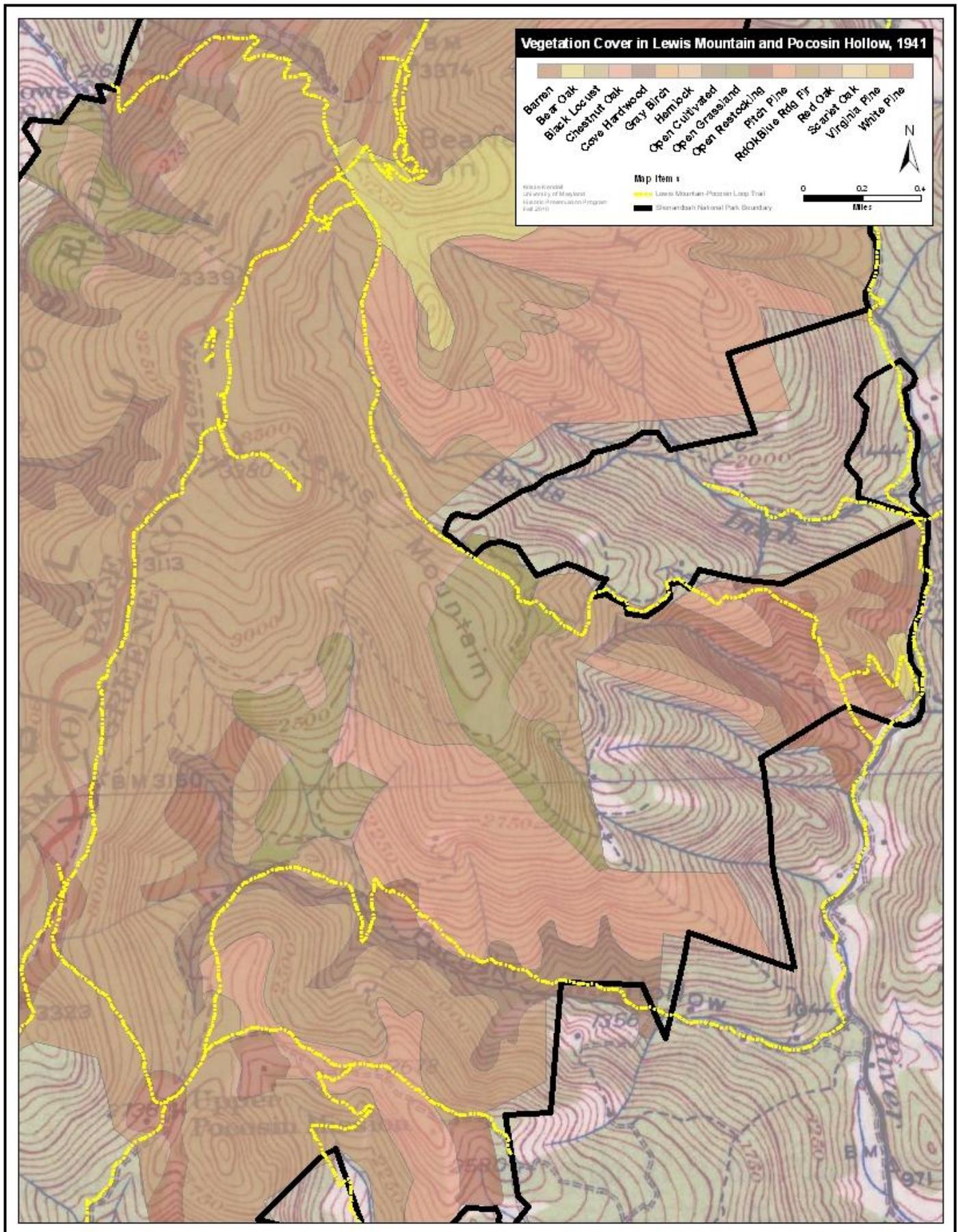


Figure 13. Vegetation Cover circa 1941, Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow, Greene County, Virginia.

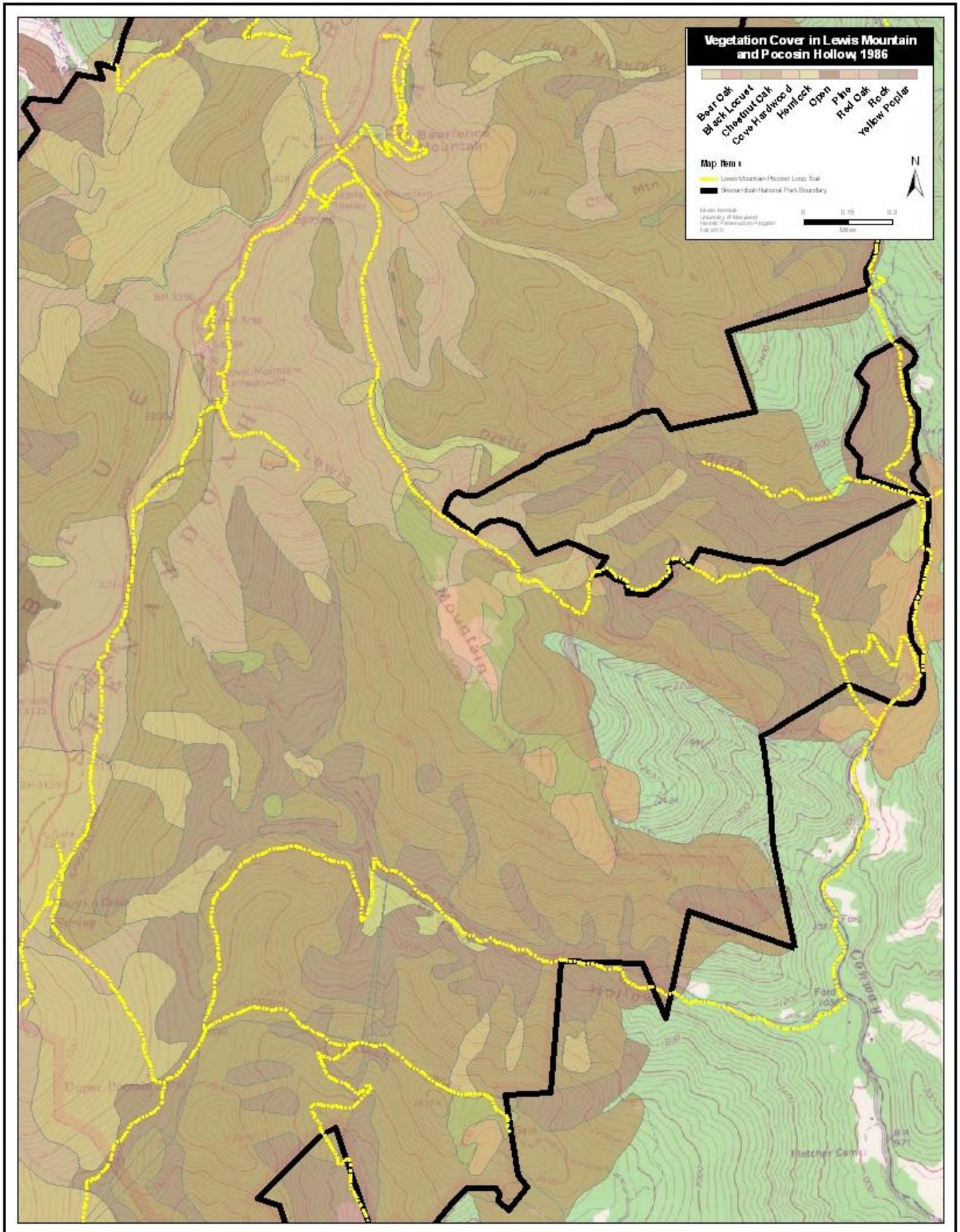


Figure 14. Vegetation Cover circa 1986, Lewis Mountain and Pocosin Hollow, Greene County, Virginia.

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