

# Population Perspectives of Former Home Places

A study of our people and their home places  
among the hills and hollers that became the  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park

A presentation to Jackson County Genealogical Society, August 2015  
by Don Casada

# Project overview refresher

- ▣ Locate and characterize old home places in what is now the Swain County portion of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park
- ▣ To the extent possible, identify the former owners and residents
- ▣ Assimilate and tell their stories
- ▣ Attempt to grasp and convey the surrounding circumstances

# Park history primer (Swain County)

- ▣ Original park purchases began in late 1928
  - Principal impact on residents was in Oconaluftee, Deep Creek drainages
- ▣ Fontana project purchases began in 1942 (first purchase was Forney Creek Baptist Church – June 15)

# Creek drainages: a natural focus

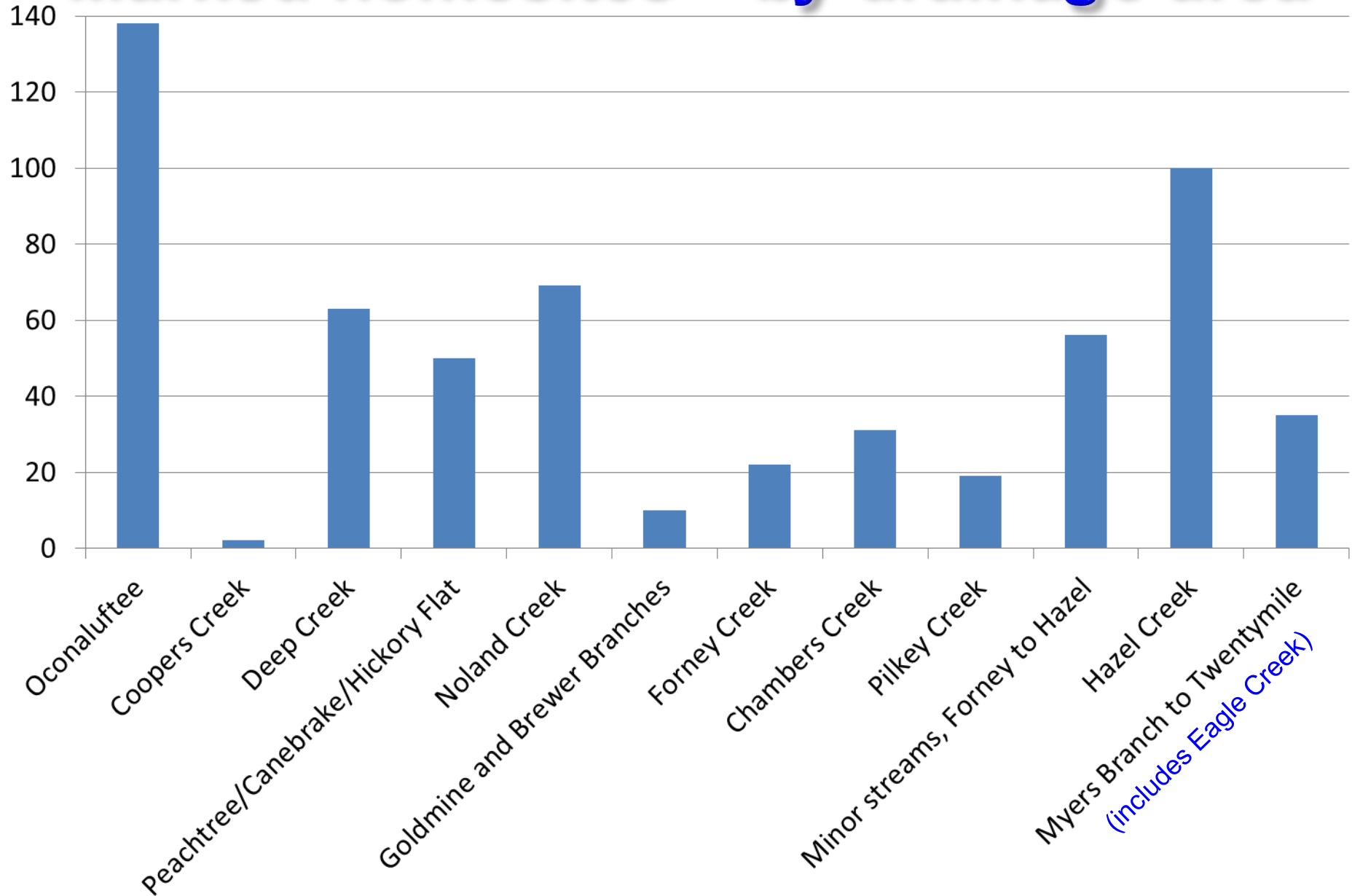
- ▣ Oconaluftee
- ▣ Cooper Creek
- ▣ Deep/Indian Creeks
- ▣ Peachtree Creek & Canebrake, Hickory Flat Branches
- ▣ Noland Creek
- ▣ Goldmine, Brewer Branches
- ▣ Forney Creek
- ▣ Jenny, Gunter, Pound Mill, Welch, Poplar Pole Branches
- ▣ Chambers Creek, Anthony Branch

# Creek drainages (continued)

- ▣ Kirkland Branch
- ▣ Pilkey Creek, Clark Branch
- ▣ Chesquaw Branch
- ▣ Calhoun, Mill Branches
- ▣ Whiteside Creek
- ▣ Hazel Creek
- ▣ Myers Branch
- ▣ Eagle Creek
- ▣ Fairfax area (Lewellyn, Sweet Branches)
- ▣ Twentymile Creek



# Marked homesites – by drainage area



**Tonight, we'll look population and associated patterns in the area over time**

# 1833 map – Robert Brazier, with old roads highlighted, modern locations marked

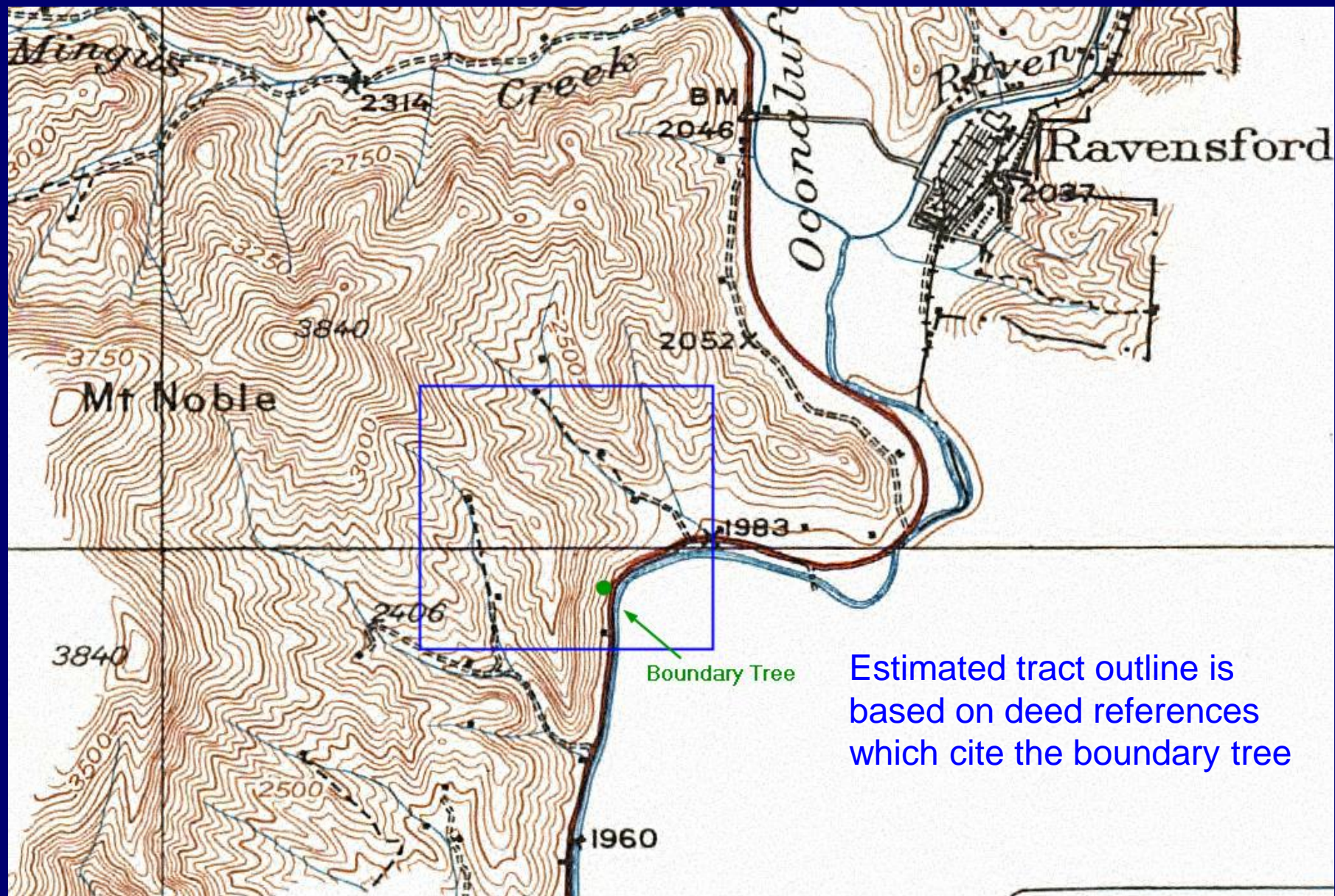




# Standard litany of earliest Luftee settlers... and some factual difficulties

- ▣ Felix Walker
  - Acquired numerous Lufty area land grants (many invalidated), lived in Maggie Valley
- ▣ *John* Jacob Mingus (“John” was a baptismal only prefix)
  - In Lincoln County in 1800
  - Road overseer of upper Scotts Creek in 1804 (however, solid deed evidence of him living in the Luftee area by 1808)
- ▣ Abraham Enloe
  - Recorded in Rutherford County census in 1810; bought what is now known as the Floyd or Enloe-Floyd Bottoms from John Hyde in 1815
- ▣ Ralph (Rafe) Hughes
  - In 1810, was living in Buncombe County, miles from Luftee; an 1824 Raven Fork land grant noted his improvements

# One of a few excellent candidates for earliest settlers in what is now the park: John Hyde



## Story told by the daughter of John Hyde

“My father John Hyde moved from North Carolina – Haywood County – to Missouri in 1816 and settled in Washington County. On the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> of October 1818 my father was killed by his own negro boy while camped out improving a place on the Gasconade River in Gasconade County.”

Catherine Johnson

Note: John Hyde purchased four slaves from Abraham Enloe in 1815 (Haywood County deeds)

Hyde's property was legally held  
That was not always the case

## Humphrey Posey recorded preaching to whites in Big-bear's town

“Wednesday 15 – In the evening preached among the whites in the bounds of the Big-bear's town on Tuckaseigy; Thursday 16, on Socoa; Friday on Jonathan creek, and then home; having tried to preach thirty-six times on my journey.”

(From *Latter Day Luminary*; the dates are in April, 1818, a year before it was legal for whites to live in Big Bear's town - now Bryson City)

## Big Bear complained to RJ Meigs of white intruders (passages from Oct 1816 and April 1817 letters)

“We now apply to you for to put a stop to the white people settling our lands, and to have those removed that are already settled who are of no use to us.”

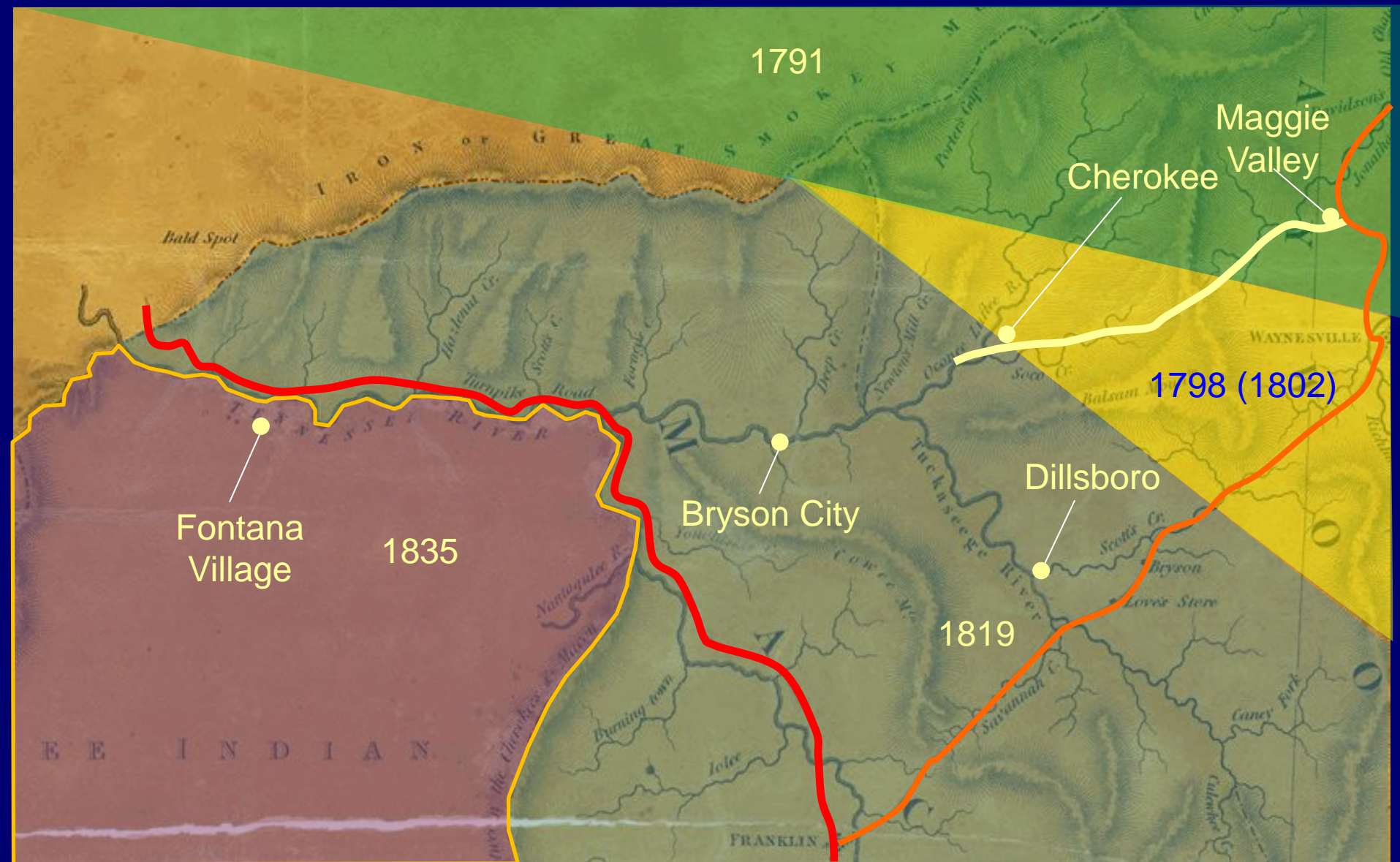
“You have wrote to the settlers to remove; this we plainly see will not do, as they pay no regard to your letters.”

“Those who have settled on our lands have their fire arms and threaten death to any of our people who will offer to put a stop to their intrusions; this, we think, calls for your presence.”

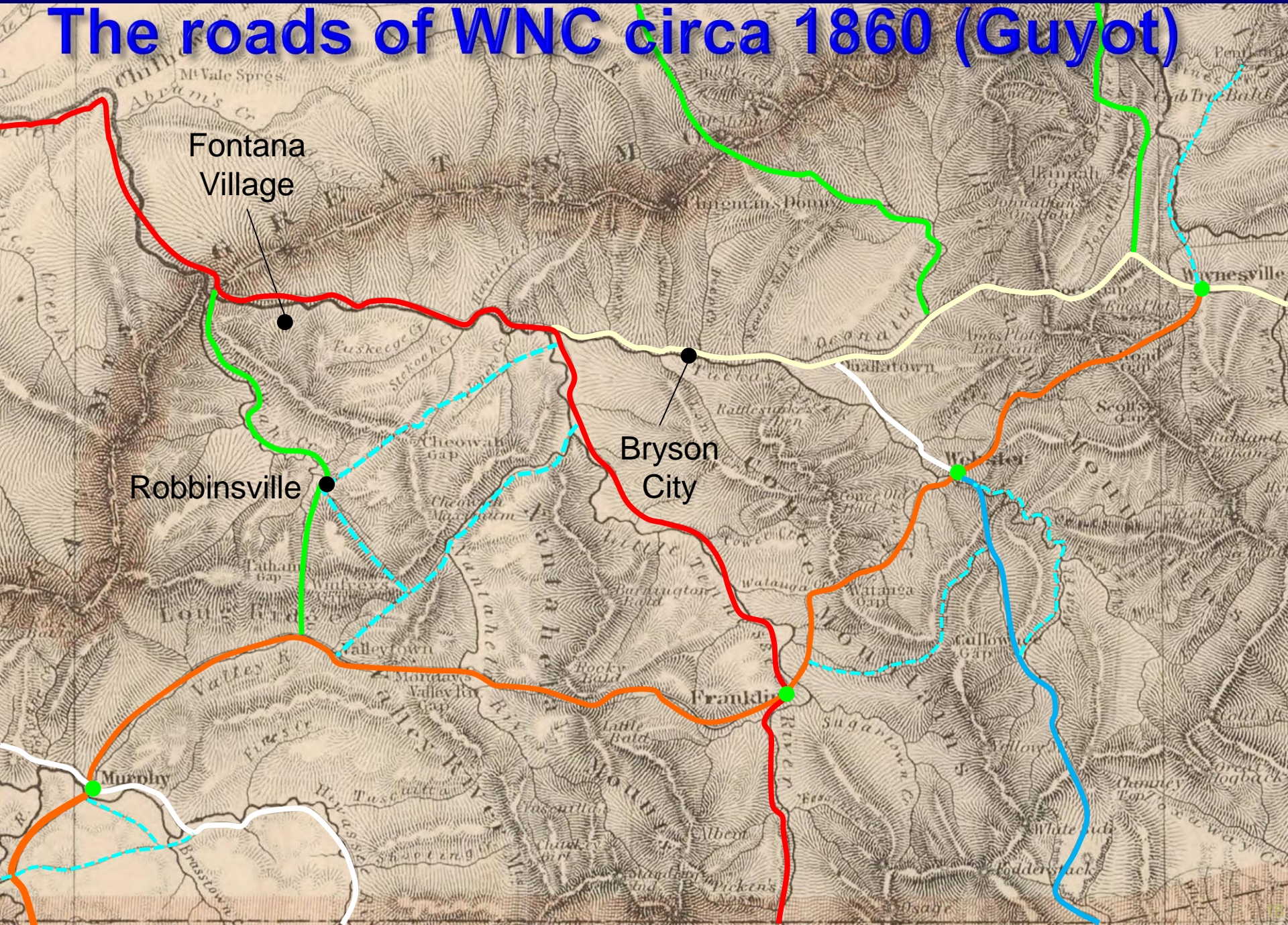
“There is more a-coming in every day and it appears that the upper part of the Nation is neglected or we would have had our own lines put to right as well as the Tennessee line.”

“The lower part has engaged the whole of your attention.”

# Subsequent cessions occurred in 1819 and 1835



# The roads of WNC circa 1860 (Guyot)



# From *The Southern Appalachian Forests* (Ayres and Ashe, USGS, 1905)

- ▣ Oconaluftee “above forks” - about 70 families, most in the Indian settlement on Raven Fork
- ▣ Deep Creek – about 30 families; a wagon road extends to near the head
- ▣ Noland Creek – only a few families; a road goes several miles up the stream
- ▣ Forney Creek – extent of population not mentioned; a road goes several miles up the stream

## From *The Southern Appalachian Forests* (Ayres and Ashe, USGS, 1905) , continued

- ▣ Hazel Creek – 17 families; rough roads extend up both branches nearly to the head...main road goes to Bushnell over southern end of Forneys Ridge (Welch Ridge)
- ▣ Eagle Creek - only two families; no road – only bridle paths....a very rough road from the mouth to Bushnell
- ▣ Twentymile Creek - only one family; rough road four miles up the stream. It is twenty miles to both Bushnell and Maryville, TN.

# *The Southern Appalachian Forests:* Some area non-Smokies drainages

- ▣ Savannah Creek – probably more than 100 families; wagon road is in fair condition
- ▣ Alarka Creek – about 50 families; road is in very bad condition
- ▣ Brush Creek – about 15 families; rough road
- ▣ Tellico Creek – 22 families; ten miles by rough wagon road to Almond
- ▣ Tuckasegee River between Webster and Bushnell – Thickly settled; nearly every stream has a wagon road built up it

# Census data provides useful perspectives on mobility of early settlers

- Names around Moses Proctor in the 1830  
Macon County census:

<u>Given</u>	<u>Surname</u>	<u>In Macon in 1840?</u>
John	Shuler	Yes
Francis	Poindexter	No
Thos W P	Poindexter	No
Edward L	Poindexter	No
John	Chambers	Yes
Joel	Crisp	Yes
<b>Moses</b>	<b>Proctor</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Joseph	Welch	Yes
Spencer	Shearer	No
David	Hayse	No
James	Shearer	No
David	Welch	No*

# An alternative insight, ¾ century later: NCGS map populated with names by Horace Kephart



Map source: Hunter Library Special Collections

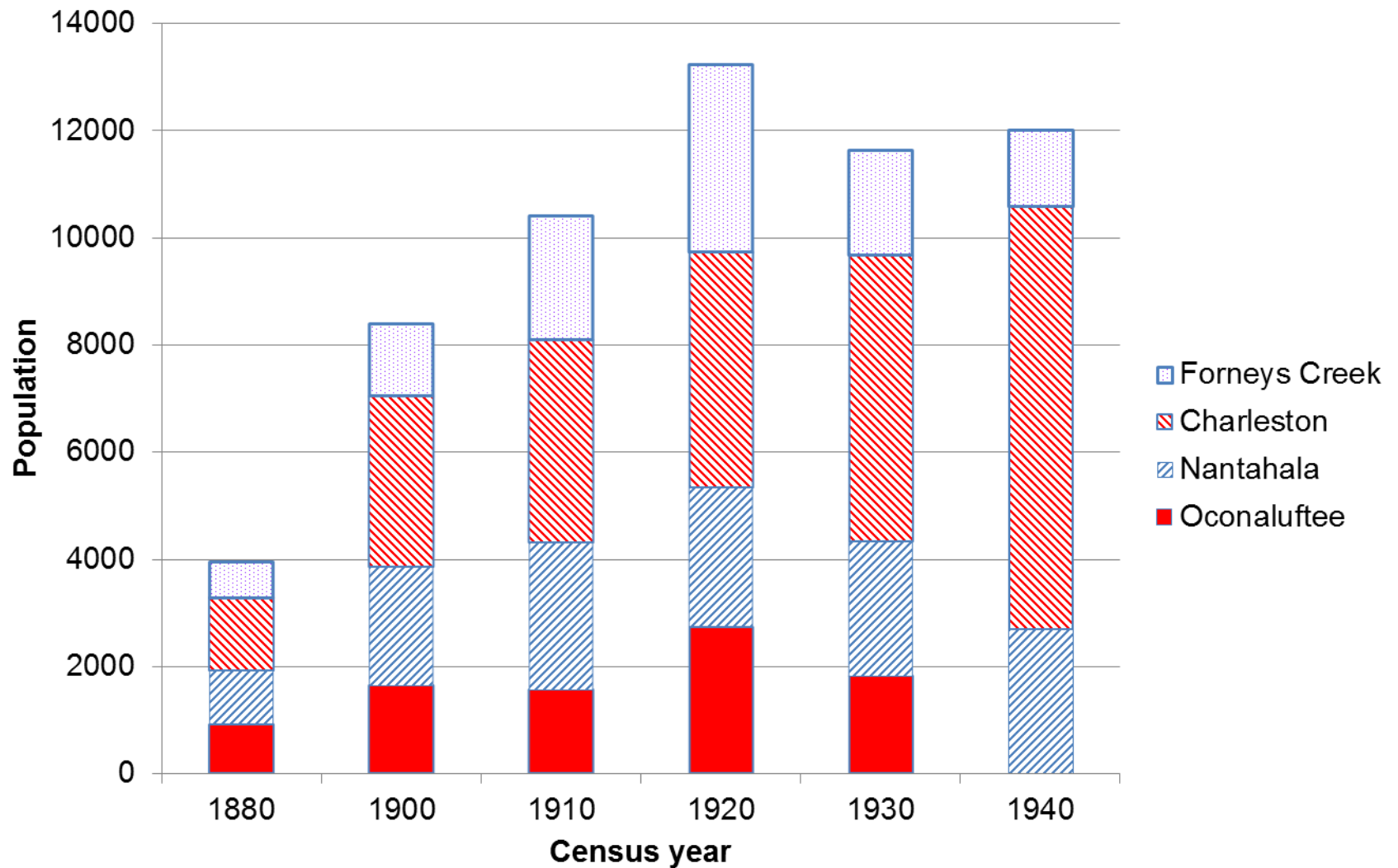
# Relative sequence of names in 1900, 1910, from Medlin and going up Hazel Creek

From Medlin up Hazel Creek	1900 Family #	1910 Family #
old Pete Laney place	48	76
Jack Coburn	86	Cooper House, Bryson City
Witt Hensley	Not found	59
G.A. Brooks	79	61
U.S. Brooks	With father, G.A.	60
George Cook	219	55
H.R. Cook	81	57
Mack Cook	83	Not found
(Thomas) Jud(son) Hall	225	51
Joshua Calhoun	223	49
Pink Martin	With father James, 150	50
John Calhoun	With Joshua, 223	With Joshua, 49

# Observations from Moses Proctor and the NCGS/Kephart map evaluations

- ▣ Anecdotal evidence of substantial mobility, both in the 1830-1840 and 1900-1910 time frames – completely contrary to the “lives of self-conscious isolation” portrayed by the likes of Horace Kephart
- ▣ Non-linear relationship in census sequence; that is, even in these early years, one can't assume the census taker's entries were in geographical order

# 1880-1940 Swain population pattern



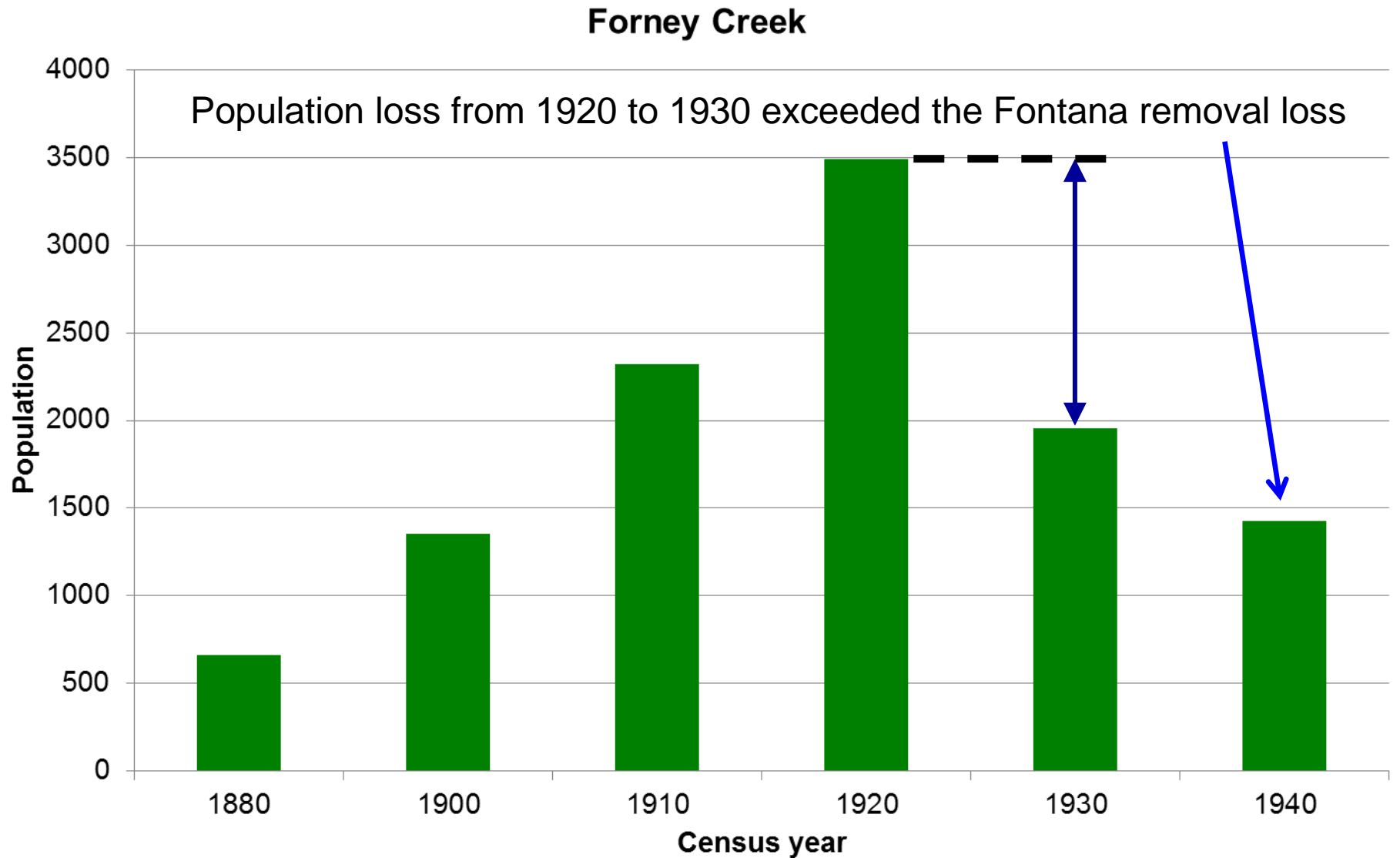
NOTE: These are census districts and refer to areas beyond the place names. For example, Eagle Creek, some 13 crow flying miles west of Forney Creek, was in the Forneys Creek census district.

# A dominant population factor: the invasion of lumber companies shortly after 1900

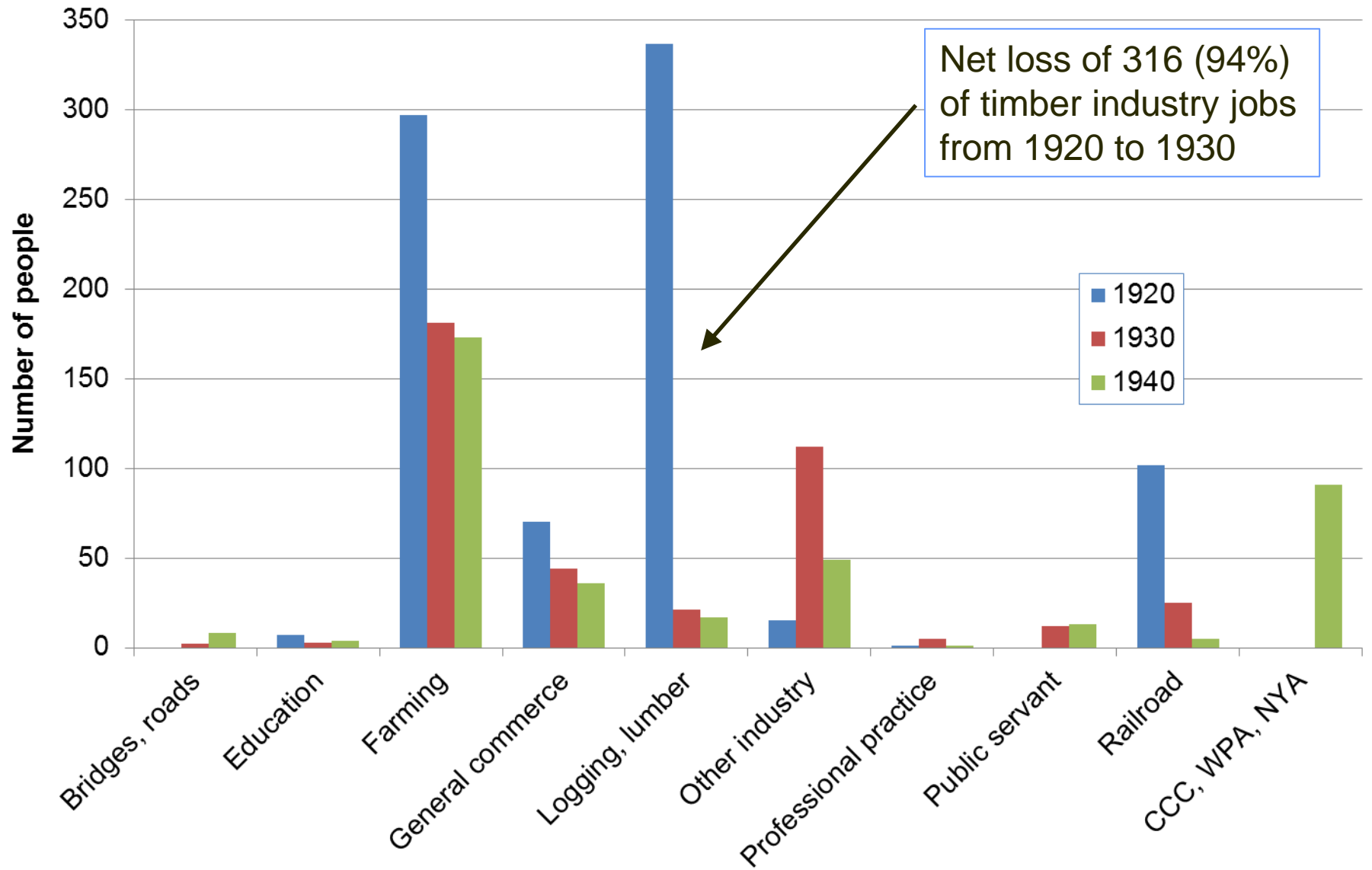
<u>Company</u>	<u>State</u>
▣ Kitchens Lumber (Twentymile Creek - 1906)	PA
▣ Montvale Lumber (Eagle Creek - 1905)	SC
▣ Ritter Lumber (Hazel Creek - 1904)	OH
▣ Norwood Lumber (Forney Creek - 1910)	WV
▣ Champion Fibre (Noland, Lands, Deep, Coopers Creeks, Oconaluftee River - 1907)	OH
▣ Whitmer-Parsons Pulp & Lumber (Raven Fork – 1909)	WV, DE

Note: Dates listed are first tract purchase dates, not the start of extensive logging operations. There were quite a few other companies, including some which began in the 1890s – but the scale of earlier operation was considerably smaller

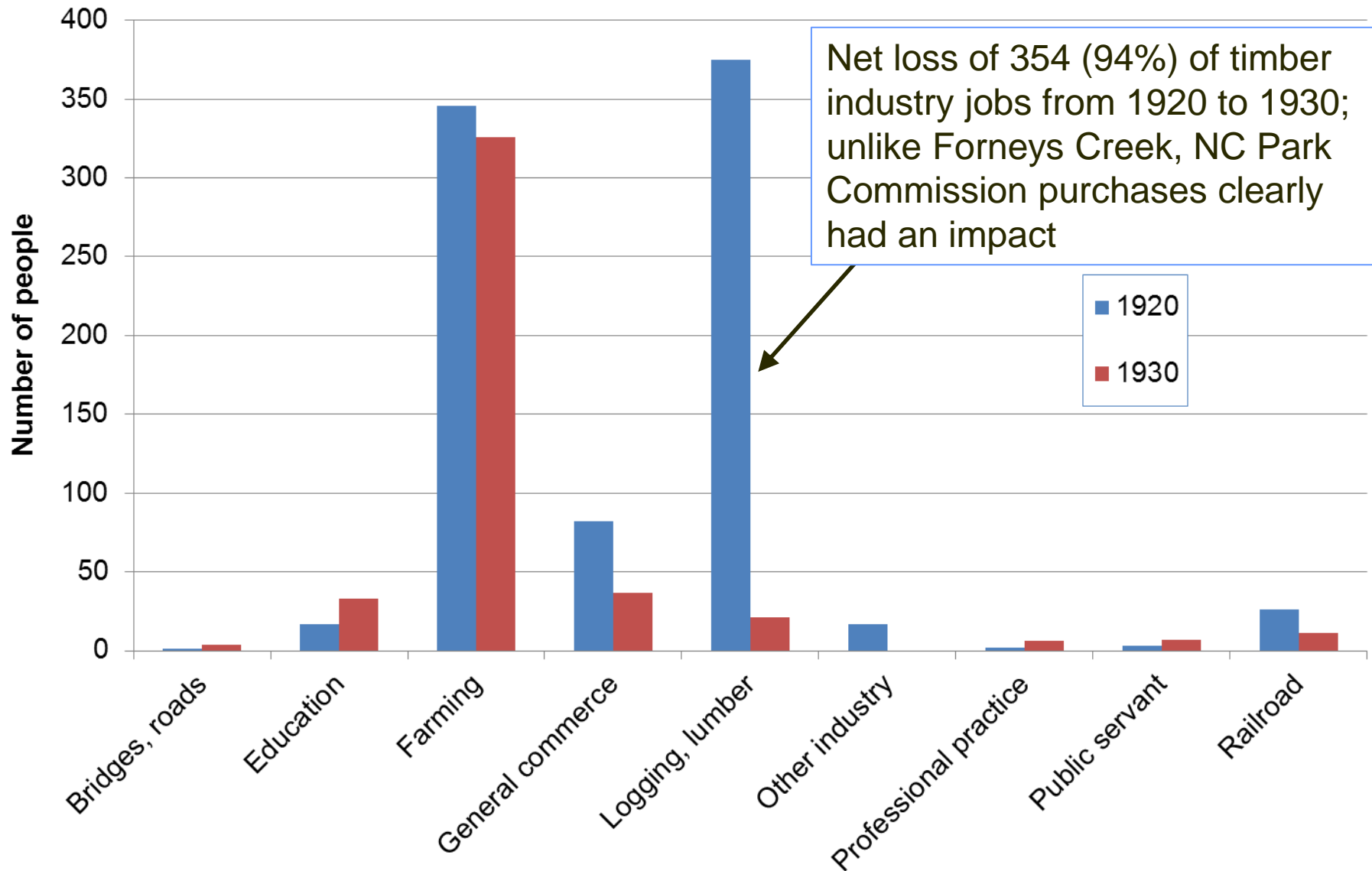
# Focusing on Forneys Creek districts



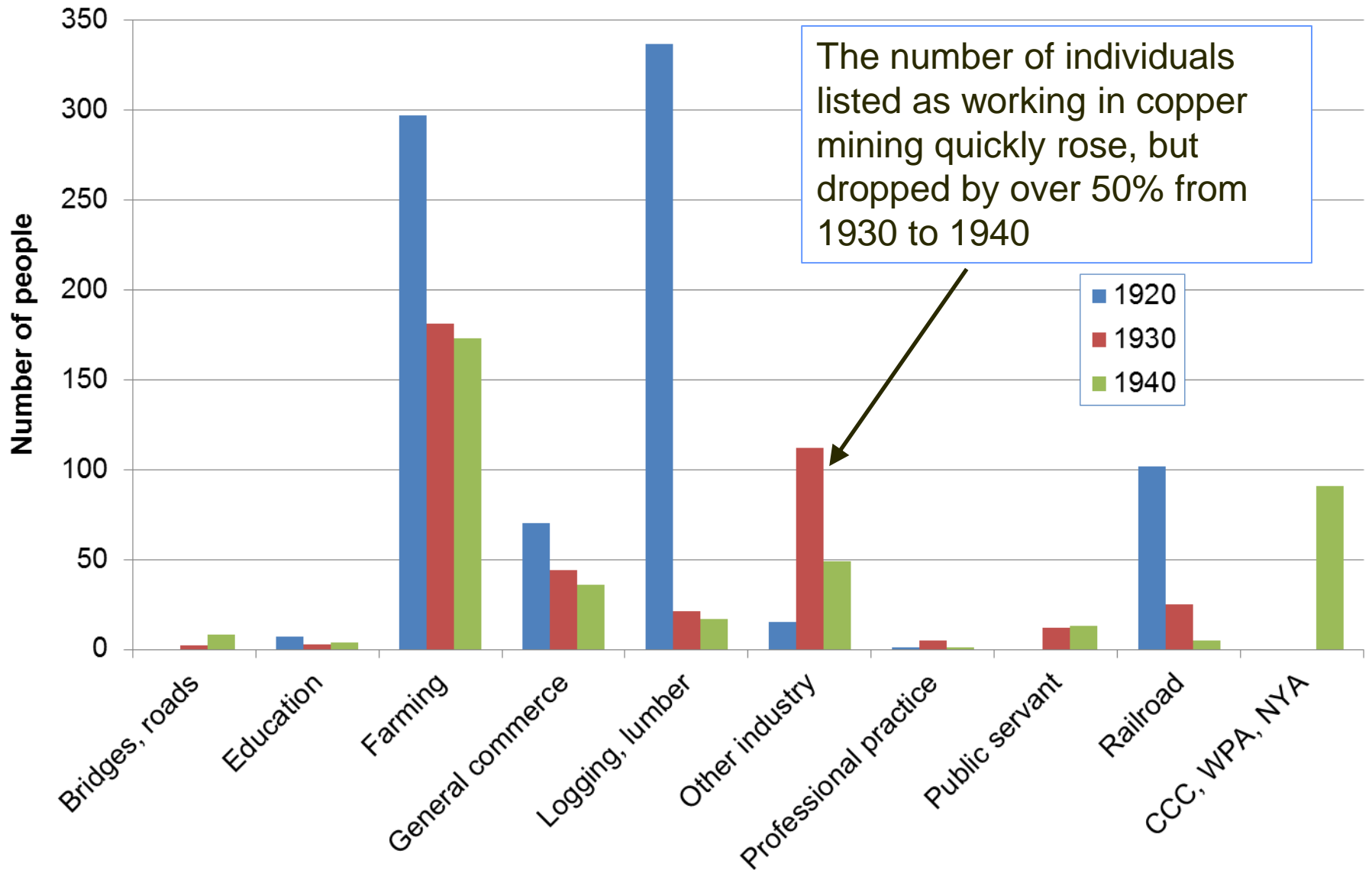
# Forneys Creek employment, 1920-40



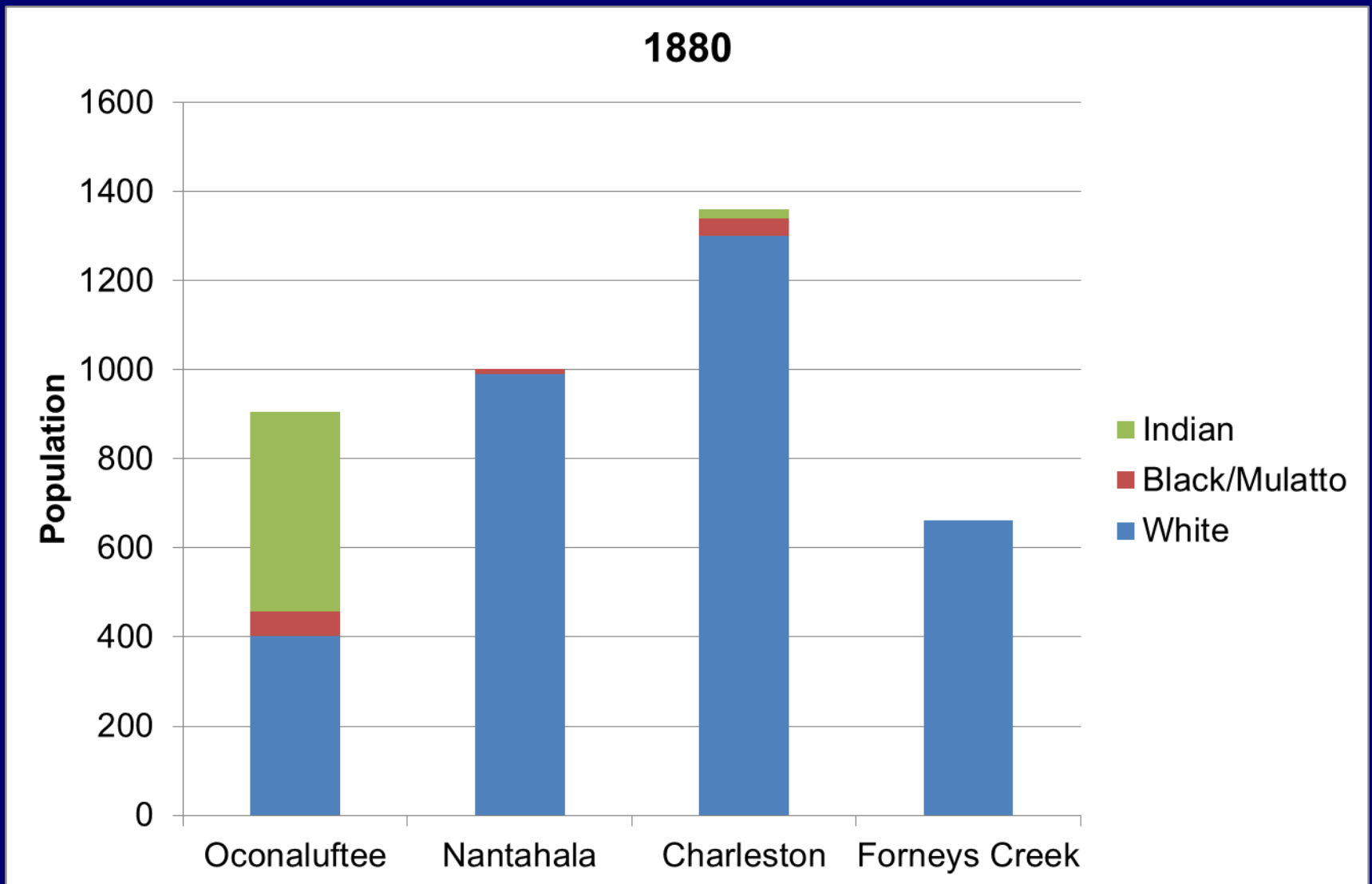
# Loss in logging-related employment also occurred on Oconaluftee



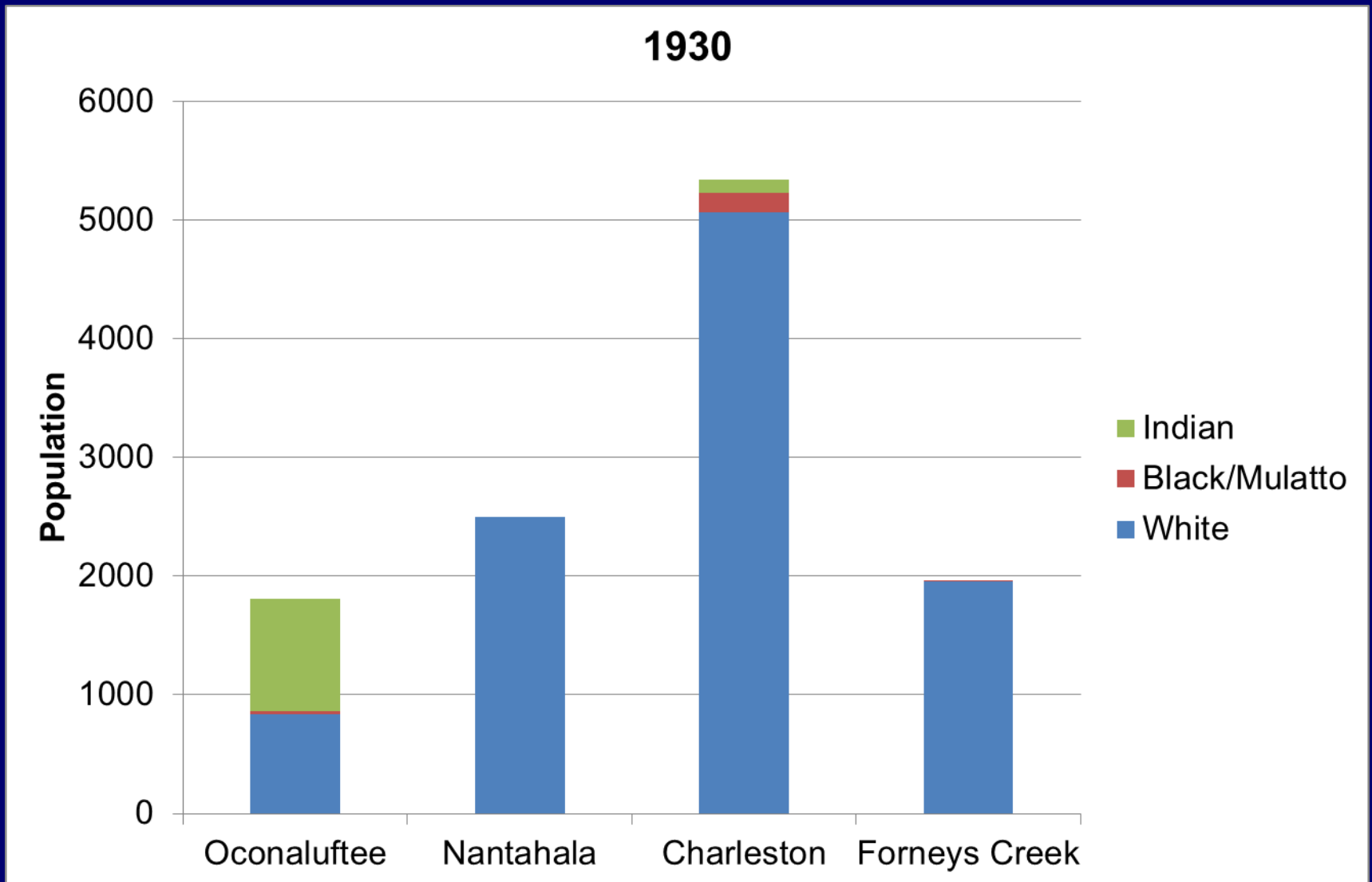
# Forneys Creek mining employment surged, but then fell precipitously



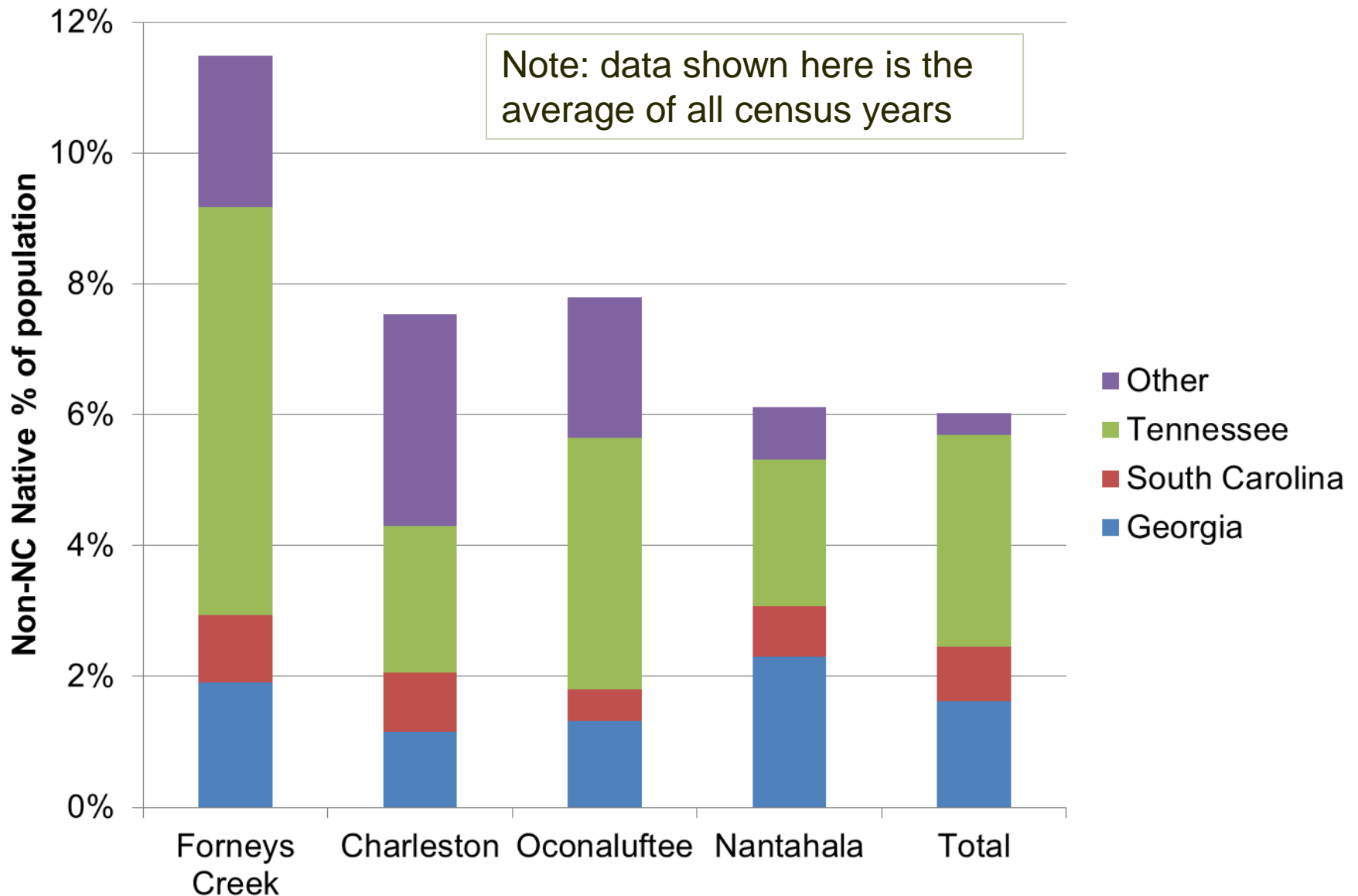
# A look at racial distribution, 1880



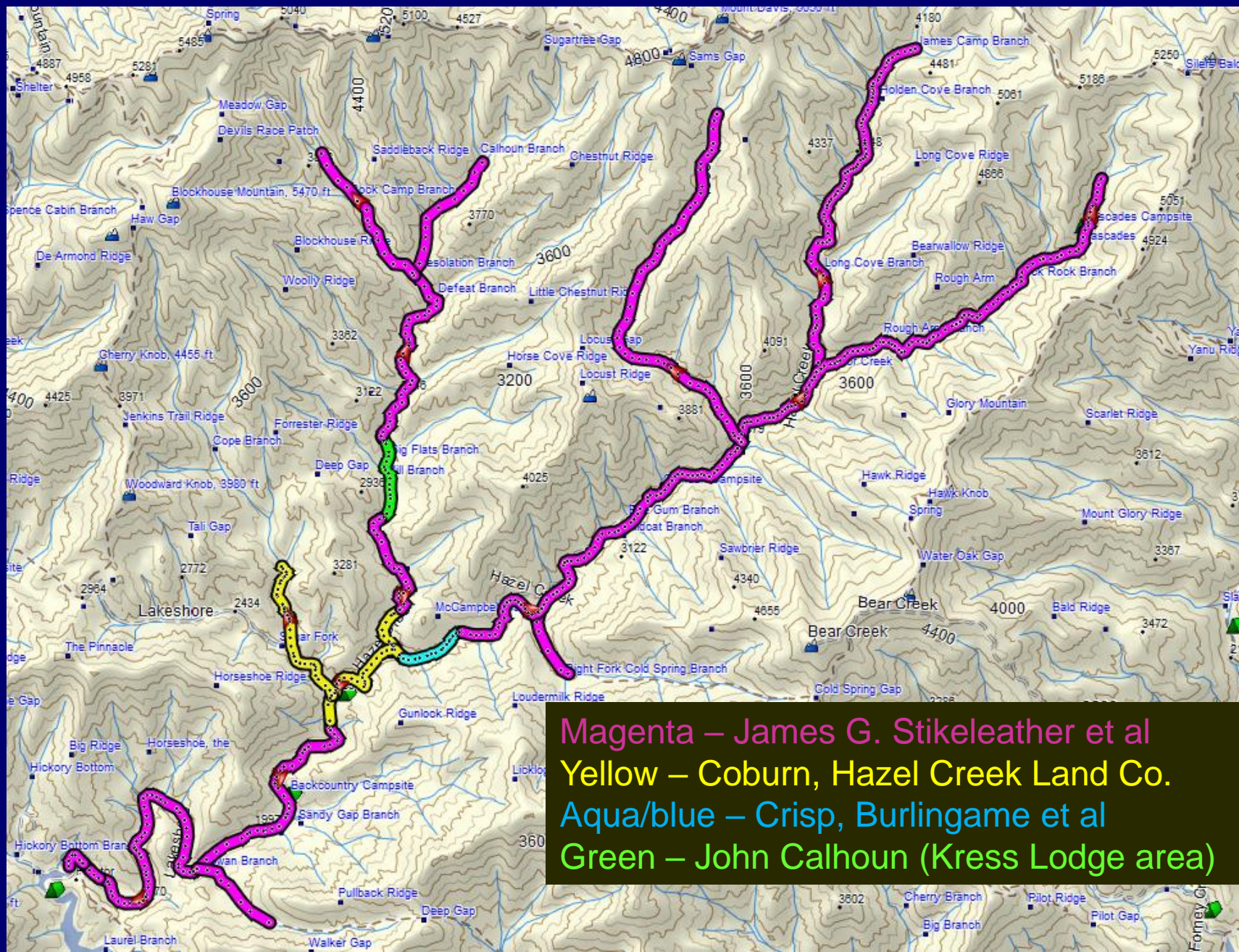
# The 50-year shift in absolute numbers was greater than the shift in relative racial makeup



# Forneys Creek had a higher percentage of “outlanders” than any of the other districts



# Hazel Creek waters & land: privately owned and patrolled in 1940



Magenta – James G. Stikeleather et al  
Yellow – Coburn, Hazel Creek Land Co.  
Aqua/blue – Crisp, Burlingame et al  
Green – John Calhoun (Kress Lodge area)