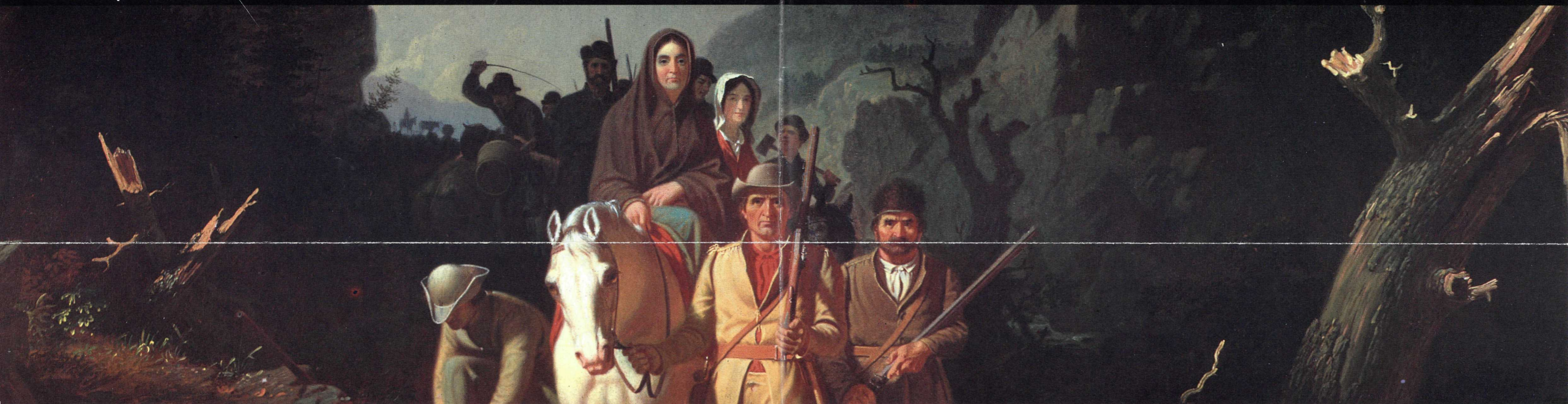


# Cumberland Gap

Cumberland Gap National Historical Park  
Kentucky/Tennessee/Virginia

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Official Map and Guide



## Warrior's Path, Wilderness Road

**Stand at Cumberland Gap and watch the procession of civilization, marching single file—the buffalo following the trail to the salt springs, the Indian, the fur-trader and hunter, the cattleraiser, the pioneer farmer—and the frontier has passed by.**

Frederick Jackson Turner, 1893

From Maine to Georgia the Appalachian Mountains rose like a giant wall, protecting the American colonies from their enemies: the French in Canada and American Indians to the west. Land transportation was primitive, and the nearly trackless mountains that offered security to the colonists also kept the growing population confined along the eastern seaboard. In the South, though,

Cumberland Gap had long been used to cross the Appalachians. The American Indians learned of it by following the buffalo, and it had become a major route to the hunting grounds of Kentucky. The gap was also an important feature on the Warrior's Path that led south from the Potomac River, across the gap, and north to the Ohio River.

In 1750 the first white explorers came upon the gap. Thomas Walker had been hired to stake out an 800,000-acre grant beyond the mountains of the Blue Ridge. After two months of searching, Walker and his companions returned home. They had not found the Kentucky bluegrass, but they did find the gap that would lead settlers to the

region. Colonists could not immediately take advantage of the trail through the mountains because wars with the French and the Indians kept the western frontier closed.

When peace returned hunters began crossing the mountains. Daniel Boone spent two years exploring alone, then returned to North Carolina. In 1775, after the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals, in which a large portion of the Kentucky country was obtained from the Cherokee Indians, Boone and 30 men marked out the Wilderness Trail from Cumberland Gap into Kentucky. Immigration began immediately, and by the end of the Revolutionary War some 12,000 persons had crossed into the new territory. By 1792 the population

Detail from George Caleb Bingham's *Daniel Boone Escorting Settlers through the Cumberland Gap, 1851-2*

The Washington University Gallery of Art, St. Louis, Mo.

was more than 100,000, and Kentucky was then admitted to the Union.

In the 1790s traffic on the Wilderness Road increased. Between 1780 and 1810 from 200,000 to 300,000 people had crossed the gap heading west. Each year large herds of livestock were driven east. As it had been for the Indians, the gap was an important route of commerce and transportation.

In the 1820s and 1830s engineering overcame the mountain wall. The west could be reached via the Erie and Pennsylvania Main Line canals, or on steamboats up the Mississippi River. Cumberland

Gap declined in importance, but it had overseen the opening of the first American West.

**Daniel Boone** No name is more associated with Cumberland Gap and the opening of the West than Daniel Boone's. He was not the first person to see the gap, to explore Kentucky, or even to settle there, but this does not reduce his impact upon the land and the people. He embodied qualities admired by frontier people: courage, agility, and strength.

Daniel Boone was born near Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1734. He had little schooling but his innate intelligence complemented his physical abilities. When he was 12 his father gave him a

rifle, and Daniel soon became renowned as a hunter. A few years later he participated in the disastrous Braddock campaign that led to the French and Indian Wars. On this campaign Boone first heard of the fabulous Kentucky country. In 1767 he set out to explore the West. Eight years later he founded Boonesborough. He eventually served in several positions in local government.

Boone had continual problems with land claims, and by 1788 all his lands in Kentucky had been lost in legal battles. He moved to what is now West Virginia in 1788 and 10 years later moved again to Missouri, where he died in 1820.

## Early History



Long before people came here, bison and deer in search of food trampled a path through the gap. For Indians the gap was a vital pass to hunting grounds in what would later be Kentucky. It was also the key pass on the Athawominee (path of the armed ones), or the Warrior's Path, the trail of trade and war. The trail today (left) is nothing like the original trail, which was four feet wide and densely forested.



1775

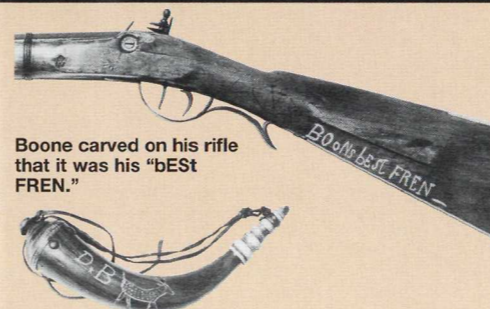
Cherokee chief Cunne Shote (left) about the time of the American Revolution.

Daniel Boone (right) sat for this portrait in a Missouri cabin when he was 86. The artist made a pencil sketch and a small oil painting, noting in his diary that Boone reminisced about his early adventures.

Shote: Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Okla.  
Boone: Chester Harding, The J.B. Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Ky.



1792



Boone carved on his rifle that it was his "bEST FREN."

Boone's powder horn.

Kentucky Military History Museum, Frankfort, Ky.

Kentucky's population soon topped 100,000, and, in 1792, it was admitted to the Union as the 15th State, the first west of the Allegheny Mountains. That year its state legislature adopted a seal—with two men shaking hands and the motto "United We Stand, Divided We Fall."



1800



The Wilderness Road through the Cumberland Gap became a two-way thoroughfare. As the stream of settlers moved

west, thousands of cattle, sheep, pigs, and turkeys from western farms traveled east to the seaboard markets.

## Visitor Information

**Locations and Hours** Cumberland Gap National Historical Park contains more than 20,000 acres in Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee. It can be reached via U.S. 25E from Kentucky and Tennessee or U.S. 58 from Virginia. The park gates are open from 8 a.m. to dusk year round. A visitor center, open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily except December 25 and January 1, is on U.S. 25E in Middlesboro, Kentucky.

**Camping and Picnicking** The 160-site Wilderness Road Campground is in Virginia on U.S. 58. Each site has a pull-in (some are adequate for large trailers and RVs), picnic table, and grill. Running water and restrooms with flush toilets and electric lights are available. There are 49 sites with electric hookups. An amphitheater, nature trails, and a picnic area are near the campground. Campgrounds on the Ridge Trail are accessible by foot only. They are primitive, and permits are required. Contact the park for information.

In the backcountry you should have an alternate fuel source. Fires may be restricted or prohibited depending on fuel supply and weather.

**Hiking** The park's 50 miles of hiking trails range from short self-guided nature trails to longer overnight trails. Some park areas, such as Sand Cave and White Rocks, may be reached only by trail. Trail guides and information are available at the visitor center. Overnight use requires a permit.

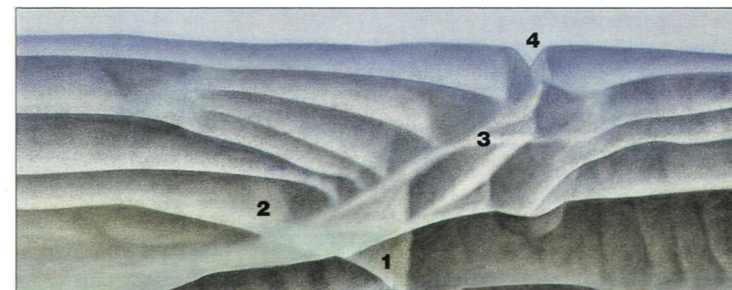
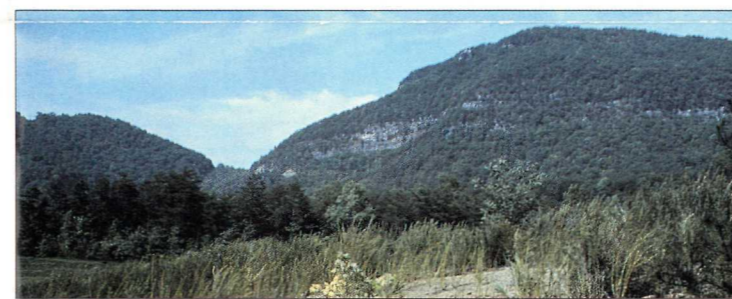
**Interpretive Programs** Campfire programs, hikes, walks, music and craft demonstrations, tours of Hensley Settlement, and other activities are scheduled daily from mid-June to Labor Day. You are invited to join in the park's programs. Contact the park to arrange for group programs.

**Accommodations** Motels are in Middlesboro, Kentucky, and Cumberland Gap, Tennessee. Restaurants, grocery stores, and medical facilities are available within five miles of the park.

**Pine Mountain State Resort Park** Kentucky's first state park, created in 1924, features some of the finest mountain views in the tri-state area. From the overlook at Chained Rock, you can see the Narrows (see 4 on diagram, right) and the Cumberland Ford, the shallow spot in the Cumberland River where travelers could cross safely. For state park information call: 606-337-3066.

**Caution** Cumberland Gap National Historical Park is a wild area. For your safety never hike alone. Avoid snakes and three-leaved poison ivy. Drive alertly. Watch your footing near cliffs—a fall can be fatal.

**More Information** Write: Superintendent, Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, Box 1848, Middlesboro, KY 40965-1848. Call: 606-248-2817. Internet: [www.nps.gov/cuga](http://www.nps.gov/cuga).



## Nature's Corridor

Cumberland Gap, a natural pass through the wilderness (left), has been used as a transportation corridor since prehistoric times. In the 1700s and 1800s the gap became a route for commerce and western migration. Today it remains an important route for both business and pleasure traffic. When Cumberland Gap National Historical Park was authorized by Congress in 1940, U.S. 25E, a major paved highway, passed through the gap, comprising the historic scene known to Indians and early settlers. To restore Cumberland Gap to its 1790s appearance, U.S. 25E was rerouted through the Cumberland Gap Tunnel that opened in 1996.

At Cumberland Gap natural features combined to open the way through the Appalachians. North of the gap, a wall of mountains blocked westward passage for more than 400 miles. Early settlers from the Carolinas and the mid-Atlantic region were forced to travel through the Cumberland Gap to reach Kentucky.

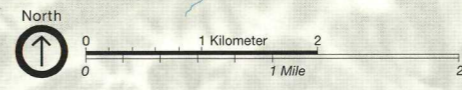
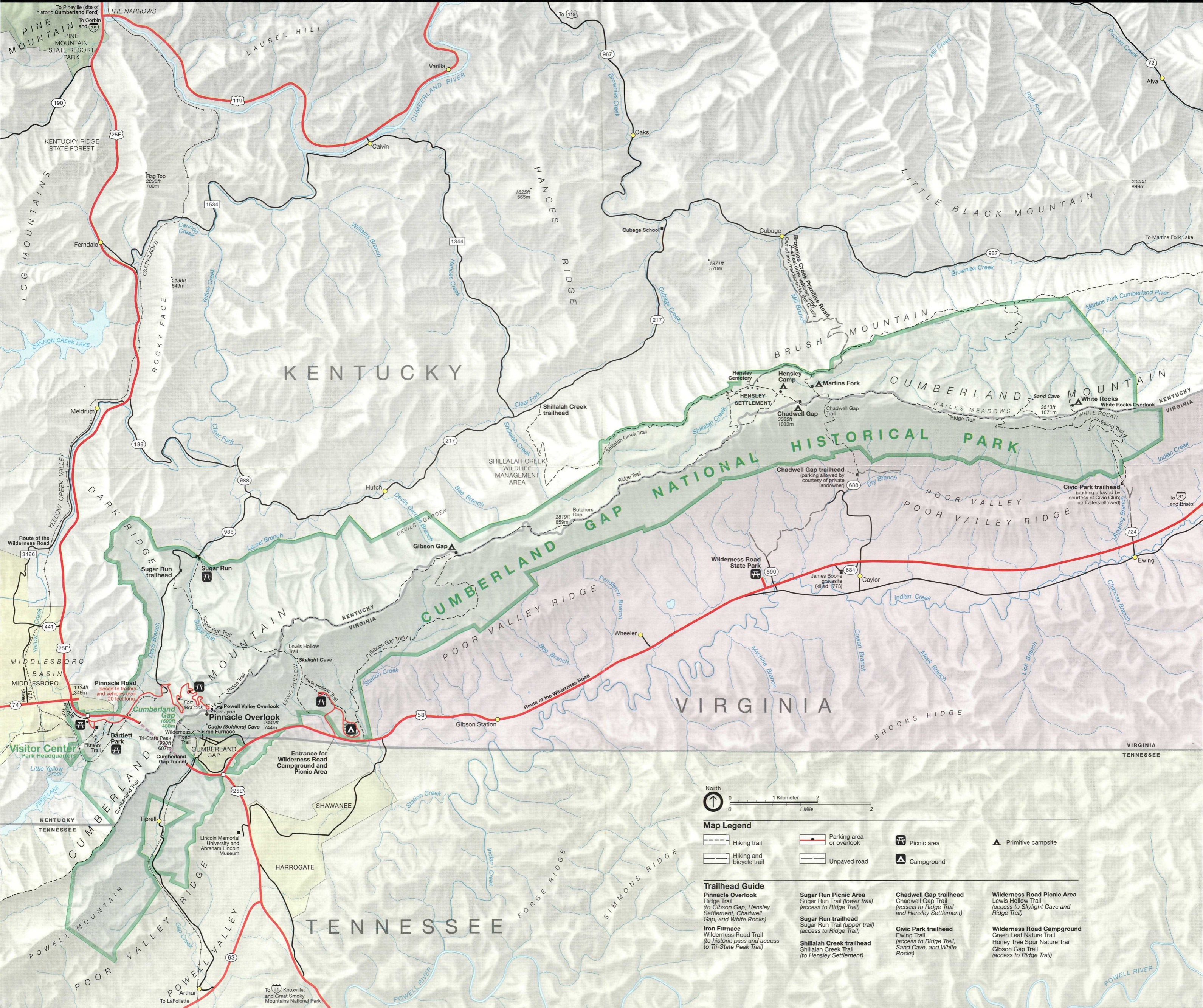
At one time this land was flat, and Yellow Creek flowed south into Powell River (see diagram, left). As Cumberland Mountain pushed up, Yellow Creek cut a notch, or gap (1). The mountain rose faster than the creek, and the creek was diverted north into the Cumberland River. North of the gap is Middlesboro Basin (2), a flat circular area. Yellow Creek Valley (3), leads to the Narrows (4), a gap that cuts through Pine Mountain and leads eventually to Kentucky's Bluegrass region.

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### Map Legend

- Hiking trail
- Parking area or overlook
- Hiking and bicycle trail
- Unpaved road
- Picnic area
- Campground
- Primitive campsite

### Trailhead Guide

- Pinnacle Overlook**  
Ridge Trail  
(to Gibson Gap, Hensley Settlement, Chadwell Gap, and White Rocks)
- Sugar Run Picnic Area**  
Sugar Run Trail (lower trail)  
(access to Ridge Trail)
- Sugar Run trailhead**  
Sugar Run Trail (upper trail)  
(access to Ridge Trail)
- Shillalah Creek trailhead**  
Shillalah Creek Trail  
(to Hensley Settlement)
- Chadwell Gap trailhead**  
Chadwell Gap Trail  
(access to Ridge Trail and Hensley Settlement)
- Civic Park trailhead**  
Ewing Trail  
(access to Ridge Trail, Sand Cave, and White Rocks)
- Wilderness Road Picnic Area**  
Lewis Hollow Trail  
(access to Skylight Cave and Ridge Trail)
- Wilderness Road Campground**  
Green Leaf Nature Trail  
Honey Tree Spur Nature Trail  
Gibson Gap Trail  
(access to Ridge Trail)

**Iron Furnace**  
Wilderness Road Trail  
(to historic pass and access to Tri-State Peak Trail)