

Historic Resource Study
African Americans and the
Blue Ridge Parkway

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Scope and Structure of the Study

This study of African Americans and their relationship to the Blue Ridge Parkway includes information that focuses on segregation, a black Civilian Conservation Corps Camp that worked on the parkway in Galax, Virginia, and the African American communities that surround the parkway. Research was conducted at the Blue Ridge Parkway Archives in Asheville, North Carolina, the W. L. Eury Appalachian Collection of Appalachian State University's Belk Library in the Appalachian Collection in Boone, North Carolina, Galax Carroll Regional Library in Galax, Virginia, the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.

The intended use of this study is to understand the involvement of African Americans on the parkway since its beginning and the communities the road passes through. Information in this study could be used to determine a site or sites to educate visitors about the relationship between African Americans and the parkway. Information in this study could also be used to help park rangers prepare interpretive campfire talks at existing recreational areas. A list of recommendations for further research is included along with a list of people who might be helpful in future investigation and study.

The study is constructed in three sections starting with segregation with sources spanning the years of 1936 to the 1960s. The black CCC camp is second with sources from 1940 to 1946. Finally, African American communities are studied with references from slavery times to present day.

The first section chronicles the process of parkway officials' planning and implementing segregated recreation areas on the parkway. It documents correspondence about segregation, pictures from segregated areas, and maps from yearly master plans illustrating segregated picnic grounds and bathrooms.

Section two focuses on the black Civilian Conservation Corps Camp, NP-29, in Galax, Virginia, which opened in the winter of 1940 and closed in spring 1942. A camp inspection report is the key piece of evidence for this camp. Details of camp work on the parkway and activities are featured here.

Finally, section three explores African American communities along the parkway. Slave cemeteries, inhabitants of the African American communities, and African American farming settlements are studied in this section. The Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife study was a key resource in finding existing African American communities and churches.

The final section includes suggestions for further research and a contact list of people who have knowledge about this subject.

Executive Summary

The African American relationship with the Blue Ridge Parkway is essential to better understand the life and development of “the pleasure road.” The parkway cuts through 469 miles of the Appalachian Mountains from Waynesboro, Virginia, to Bryson City, North Carolina. The parkway’s journey began in September 1935 with groundbreaking on the North Carolina and Virginia state line at Cumberland Knob. This study focuses on three distinct ways that encompass the African American and Blue Ridge Parkway relationship: the segregation of recreation areas in the early 1940s, a black CCC camp in Galax, Virginia that worked on landscaping the parkway, and the African American communities that the parkway passes through.

Segregation

In the midst of the Jim Crow laws, the parkway planned accordingly to accommodate African Americans. Plans for segregated bathrooms are seen as early as 1936 in the Master Plans for Doughton (Bluff) Park and Rocky Knob and Smart View tea rooms. Master Plans up to 1943 continue to illustrate segregated bathrooms or picnic areas for Cumberland Knob and Doughton (Bluff) Park. Rules to regulate African American use on the parkway were officially released in a 1939 Annual Report stating “provisions for Negroes.” These rules allowed African Americans to use the same restroom buildings but different stalls. Also in 1939, conferences were held in Washington, D.C. with W. J. Trent, Advisor to the Secretary on Negro Affairs, Acting Director of the National Park Service Arthur Demaray and Chief of Planning Thomas Vint to determine the provisions. By 1940, a North Carolina recreation survey listed five “negro” camp sites at Cumberland Knob Park near the Virginia state line.

A complaint from an African American family was reported in 1941 when they tried to use “the meadows” picnic area number 3. This area was designated for white use only where as the African Americans were to use picnic area number one called “the woods” picnic ground. Plans were made to allow blacks and whites to use the “woods” picnic area by 1942. Today, the picnic area still stands among the tall weeds with stone picnic tables and a run-down restroom building.

The greatest effort to accommodate African American use on the parkway was with the all Negro recreation area of Pine Spur at milepost 144, 27 miles south of Roanoke, Virginia. This park was to be specifically for the use of African Americans and construction began in 1941. By the end of the summer the park was partially completed with swings, picnic tables and driveways around the park. Many segregated picnic areas and parks were planned by the early 1940s but World War II stopped construction of the entire parkway in 1942. This could have been a major constraint on finishing segregated facilities combined with limited resources and insufficient use of the parkway by African Americans. By the end of the war in 1945, segregation policies seemed to have been forgotten and Pine Spur was never completed or opened.

African American employment on the parkway is another issue of interest. Since private contractors constructed the physical road of the parkway nearly 75 years ago, the employee files may have been lost or destroyed. Evidence of African American construction workers on the parkway may not exist anymore. By 1973, African Americans were finding work with the parkway as park rangers.

CCC Camp NP-29 Galax, Virginia

A major part of parkway development was in the hands of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The CCC was a part of President Roosevelt's New Deal organizations. The camps focused on landscaping work to preserve nature at National Parks around the country. Established in 1933, the camps were open to young men 18 to 25 who worked for \$30 a week, of which \$5 was kept for the enrollees and \$25 was sent home to families. These camps also focused on education and were meant to train the men for jobs after leaving the CCC. These camps were also segregated by race. About 350,000 African Americans served in the CCC during its nine year stretch between 1933 and 1942.

The Blue Ridge Parkway was granted four CCC camps to work on the road in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In Virginia, Rocky Knob, Kelso, and Galax CCC camps were established along with one North Carolina camp at Laurel Springs. The Galax camp, NP-29, was a company of African American boys starting work in December 1940. A camp inspection report indicates 180 men were enrolled in the camp by 5 June 1941. The report also states that the camp published a newspaper and had equipment for baseball, volleyball, and tennis.

Around 4 June 1941, a disturbance occurred at NP-29 that spurred an investigation by the CCC. Reports indicate that officers, race unknown, were not treating enrollees fairly. Records of the investigation include testimonies of officers and enrollees telling the story of what happened. Three men were discharged because of this incident. The ranks of these men are unknown. Another disturbance between an officer and an enrollee was documented the same month. The camp closed in May 1942. No documentation was found as to the reason for the close although the CCC's organization was disbanding in 1942.

African American Communities

The parkway passes through many small mountain towns including a few African American communities. The major source for information about African American communities on the parkway is the Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Study conducted in 1978 by a team of folklorists. This study focused on seventy miles of parkway around the state line of Virginia and North Carolina. The folklorists gathered interviews, photos, and video of the people who lived near the parkway. The vicinity of the study was limited to ten miles on either side of the parkway.

Dr. Patrick Mullen was a part of the team of folklorists in this study and focused on black religious customs and folkways. He discovered that Sparta, North Carolina, and Ararat, Virginia, contained strong African American communities. Black churches Mullen studied include Clarks Creek Primitive Progressive Baptist Church and Ararat Baptist Church of Ararat, Virginia, Redmond Creek Baptist of Galax, Virginia, and Macedonia Union Baptist Church of Sparta, North Carolina. Mullen identified families that have roots in slavery in these communities. He also interviewed Dean Gambill of Sparta, North Carolina, an African American who was raised by a white family and worked on the parkway.

Other documentation of African American heritage along the parkway comes from old correspondence and research available at the parkway archives. Mount Jefferson was once called "Negro Mountain" because of local legends of runaway slaves hiding in the cave on the summit on their way north to freedom. The Pine Spur area was home to a 108-year-old African American woman, Lizze Price, who was born a slave and sold her land to the parkway in the late 1940s.

The Peaks of Otter area where the Saunders Family established a farm around 1905 is also rich in African-American heritage. The family remained on the farm until 1942 when they sold it to the federal government. Today the homestead still stands. At the Peaks of Otter community once stood the Hotel Mons. The Saunders' daughter, Mabel, found work there waiting tables as another African American man played jazz piano for hotel guests. Moses Cone also employed black workers at his estate at milepost 294 near Blowing Rock which is now owned by the parkway.

Another ethnic community embedded close to the parkway was identified in the Irish Creek area near Buena Vista, Virginia. There Native Americans, whites, and Africans intermarried resulting in a people referred to as "ishas." It is believed that indentured servants ran away from tidewater masters to be free in the mountains. Their children were first called "free issues," then "issues" and finally the name was shortened to "isha."

Slave cemeteries have also been found on and near the parkway. These cemeteries remain at Meadows of Dan beside the Meadows of Dan Baptist Church graveyard, Pine Spur, and near the visitor's center at Peaks of Otter. Previous research at Pine Spur's cemetery suggests that a black confederate soldier is buried there. These cemeteries tie African Americans very closely to the parkway as they once inhabited the places where the road now lies.

Segregation of Recreational Areas on the Blue Ridge Parkway

Introduction to Segregation

The Supreme Court Case of 1896, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, legalized segregation by race in the United States ruling “separate, but equal” (Horton 176, 199). Until the end of segregation with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Jim Crow laws were established in most of the South including North Carolina and Virginia prohibiting African Americans from using public facilities such as restaurants, restrooms, and public parks (Horton 199, George 6). In the midst of the Jim Crow South, the federal government and the state of North Carolina and Virginia began constructing the Blue Ridge Parkway beginning September 1935 (Whisnant 45). Parkway historian, Harley Jolley explained that the parkway offered a pleasure road through the Blue Ridge Mountains making available “to the public the spectacular natural beauty of the mountains” with recreation areas along the way for motorists to stop for a picnic or to rest a while (11).

Federal parkway administrators were aware of southern culture and state and federal laws legalizing segregation in the late 1930s and early 1940s and planned accordingly for parkway recreation areas, knowing that not all visitors to the park were white. In the 1939 annual report to the director of the National Park Service, Blue Ridge Parkway Superintendent Stanley Abbott include “Provisions for Negroes” which follows (Abbott, 30 June, 1939, 16).

General plans crystallized during the year for provision of Negro facilities in the recreation parks. The following points of agreement resulted from a conference with Mr. W.J. Trent, Advisor to the Secretary on Negro Affairs, Acting Director Demaray, Chief of Planning, Thomas Vint, and others on April 26, 1939, in Washington.

1. Gasoline, service and eating facilities located close to the Parkway will in all cases provide both for White and Negro use with these provisions:
 - a. no division between White and Negro use of gasoline or automobile service facilities
 - b. no division between White and Negro use of sandwich shop, lunch counter, or sales room
 - c. separate dining rooms for White and Negro use, when dining rooms are provided.
2. In the large parks such as Rocky Knob in Virginia and the Bluff in North Carolina, separate cabin, camping, and picnicking areas will be provided for Negro use. At the Bluff Park one picnic area will be opened for joint use by both Whites and Negroes.

3. In the Matter of comfort stations, if one building is used for both Negroes and Whites, the sexes of both races will use common entrances. Inside the building separate toilets will be provided for each race. There will be no separation between Whites and Negroes in the installation of urinals and wash basins.

NOTE: These policies were approved by the Secretary

Your staff in the field and to an extent the conference in Washington recognizes that this problem has probably not seen a final solution, but that ground work has been laid to test by observation of the use of the various facilities the shaping of a final policy. The need for recreational facilities for Negroes in Western Virginia and North Carolina is considerable, and its provision in connection with the parkway in the best possible manner should be a major objective. (Abbott 30 June 1939, 16)

The "provisions" plainly stated and regulated segregation on the parkway with "separate dining rooms for 'Whites and Negroes' when dining rooms are provided," and separate toilets provided for whites and blacks but in the same building (16). For larger parks such as Rocky Knob and Bluff separate cabins, picnic, and camping grounds were to be provided (16). This report also states that Abbott and the Advisor to the Secretary on Negro Affairs, W. J. Trent, held a conference 26 April 1939, in Washington to discuss these provisions (16). A note about the provisions was made as well in the 1940 annual report confirming the plans for Negroes and the continuing development of recreation areas for Negro use (Abbott, 30 June, 1940, 17). These provisions outlined by Abbott laid the ground work for Negro areas in recreation parks in the early 1940s on the Parkway and the planning for the all Negro park, Pine Spur.

Even before the "provisions" memo, Abbott had started planned segregated areas. A memorandum to National Park Service Chief Architect, Thomas Vint, from Stanley Abbott dated 7 April 1939, conveyed plans for Negro recreation areas such as Pine Spur and Fishers Peak Park (Abbott, 7 April, 1939, 1, 2). Plans at Fishers Peak Park, near Galax, Virginia, included devoting the north end of the park for African Americans and the southern end for whites (2). The lack of land at Cumberland Knob, North Carolina, restricted any additional picnicking or camping grounds for Negroes (2). The memorandum stated the coffee shop at Rocky Knob, Virginia, would not have a dining room for "Negroes" (2).

Following that April 7th memorandum, Abbott wrote a progress report about the development of Blue Ridge Parkway recreational areas to Thomas Vint on 24 April 1939, including descriptions of which recreation area parks would include areas for Negroes (3). Parkway administrators did not fully understand how many or in what capacity Negroes would use the Parkway as this entry from the report indicates:

1. The same or more uncertainty exists in anticipating the use of the Parkway for Negroes as exists in connection with planning for recreation of

the whites; consequently, the same conservative policy of providing a desirable minimum of facility subject to extension in the future as needs become known will apply to both type parks. (Abbott, 24 April, 1939, 3)

Abbott wrote, "Within certain of the larger parks separated facilities will be provided for picnicking and camping for both races" (3). Parkway officials wanted to provide facilities for African Americans under legal policies but did not want to waste resources on areas that would not be used adequately. The Negro facilities would be placed strategically along the Parkway for maximum use at such parks as Otter Creek Virginia because it was near Lynchburg, Bedford, Staunton, Lexington, Buchanan, Buena Vista and Roanoke (3). According to the 1940 census, in Lynchburg and Roanoke nearly 22,000 African Americans, nearly 20% of the population in these cities, lived in the two urban centers ("Historical Census" 2, 3). (See Figure 1)

Pine Spur was also planned to be used exclusively by African Americans for its proximity to Roanoke (Abbott, 24 June, 1939, 3). An African American Emergency Relief Agency or Works Progress Administration crew from Roanoke was recommended by Abbott to construct Pine Spur (Abbott, 24 June, 1939, 4; Abbott, 7 April, 1939, 1). Construction of Negro facilities at the North Carolina Bluff Park, now Doughton Park, was reported to already be in progress by 1939 (Abbott, 24 June, 1939, 4). Plans for White and "Negro" areas for Fishers Peak Park were also mentioned in Abbott's report with temporary "Negro" picnic facilities to be used at Cumberland Knob for the summer of 1940 until Fishers Peak was finished (4). In the southern region of the Parkway near Pisgah National Forest, the Bent Creek recreation area was proposed to have Negro facilities in conjunction with the National Forest Service (4). There is no other mention of plans for Bent Creek after 1939. (See Figures 2 and 3). Ultimately, Cumberland Knob and Doughton Park would establish and implement segregated picnic areas.

Evidence of Segregation

Mention of the "Negro Master Plans" is found in a memorandum to Mr. Abbott from Robert G. Hall, Associate Landscape Architect dated 22 December 1939 (Hall, 22 December, 1939, 1). "The Plan" is included in a list of notes formulated after a field trip taken by Abbott and Hall (1). Beside the "Negro Maser Plans" entry are the initials RGH, most likely meaning Robert G. Hall and a note stating "RGH will be working on all master plans the first of the year" (1). These plans have not been found. Attached with the memorandum is a North Carolina Recreation Survey, date unknown, for Cumberland Knob Park. Listed here are five existing picnic and fireplace facilities for Negroes at this park (2). In the 1940 North Carolina Recreation Survey Cumberland Knob is listed as having five picnic tables and fireplaces for Negroes ("Park, and Recreation Area Study" 191).

Though a copy of a Negro Master Plan has not yet been located, a 28 June 1940, memorandum includes specific details for "Negro" use in the Virginia parks of Pine Spur, Smart View, and Rocky Knob and North Carolina parks of Cumberland Knob and Bluff Park (Abbott, 28 June, 1940, 1, 2). At the time of the memorandum, Pine Spur was in the planning stages with facilities comparable to Smart View, which had a gas station,

restaurant, and picnic areas (1). According to the plan, picnic areas at Smart View for “Negroes” were planned to be provided until Pine Spur was completed and park rangers were to designate the segregated picnic areas (1). Construction of a campground and picnicking areas for Negroes at Rocky Knob and Bluff Park was to be studied and completed once funds were available. Until then, park rangers were to direct Negroes where to picnic (1).

At Cumberland Knob, separate toilets would be provided for “Negroes” within the same bathroom for Whites. This 1940 document indicates that five picnic units were designated for Negroes and since no sign was planned to be placed for the area, the ranger were responsible for directing Negroes to the proper picnicking units (1). The memorandum states:

Cumberland Knob: Accommodations within the comfort station, one stall for men and one for women with common entrances for sexes. A five-unit picnic area has been developed for Negroes, and the ranger through the watchman will direct them to this area. No sign is to be placed for direction (Abbott 28 June, 1940 1, 2). Negro visitation to the Parkway in the first few years of its operation was very low with rangers reporting in 1940 two Negro picnic parties within two years and one half of one percent of total Parkway travel in 1942. (Abbott, 28 June, 1940, 2; Abbott, 30 June, 1942, 27)

The 1941 annual report shows that the 300 acre Pine Spur park was well under construction with clean up of woodlands, grading and crushed stone surfacing of the entrance road, a picnic loop road, and a parking area (Abbott, 30 June, 1941, 12; Abbott, 24 April, 1939, 3). The report states, “Twenty-five picnic units were installed consisting of tables and benches, fireplace, and refuse cans” (12). Even a ball field and foot trails had been constructed by 1941 (12). The report boasts that this project “has set a new standard of co-ordination and work accomplishment” for its speedy development in a single construction season (12). (See Figures 8, 9.)

The second World War broke out in December 1941, the Parkway’s construction slowed considerably and National Park Service funds dwindled (Whisnant 267). Anne Whisnant wrote in *Super-Scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History* about the dramatic decrease in the budget: “A Park Service budget that stood at \$33.5 million in 1940 plummeted to \$4.7 million in 1945” (267). *The Blue Ridge News* reports in December 1942, “The parkway is not a war road and last fall all our major construction halted” (1). Facilities for African Americans fell by the wayside, especially Pine Spur. Although travel was limited, visitors still used the parkway, even African Americans. A complaint was reported by an African-American family in August 1941 to the National Park Service Director, Newton Drury, and it outlined a confrontation that arose when the family insisted on using the white area at Bluff Park (Abbott, 30 June, 1942, 27). Smart View was about ten miles from the proposed site of the Negro Recreation Area, Pine Spur. While Pine Spur was being built in the summer of 1941, Abbott decreed that Negroes

would be able to use Smart View picnic areas until the completion of Pine Spur, with park rangers designating the segregated area (Abbott, June 28, 1940, 1).

In the 1936 master plan for Smart View (See Figure 4), separate bathrooms are identified in the Tea Room and Service Station building plans (Master Plan 1936, Smart View). No evidence of any picnic areas can be seen on this map. Out all of the proposed "Negro sites" Pine Spur was the most elaborate effort to accommodate African Americans on the parkway. The parkway master plan of 1941 and 1943 planned for Pine Spur to have a coffee shop, camping grounds, cabin area, horse shoes, swings, teeter totters, and a softball field (See Figures 5 and 6) (PKY-BR-PR-2004 9; PKY-BR-PS-2050 23). The Bluff Park incident in 1941 made it evident that parkway planners felt that a separate park was needed to accommodate African American visitors, Pine Spur was never opened, and by 1942 the park was put on hold. In the 1942 annual report Abbott wrote:

Pine Spur: The land status of this park is unchanged so far as general development is concerned. The developed area nearly completed for Negro use is not being operated because of limited Parkway travel and an inability to complete utilities and to surface the park roads for lack of nearby work program and critical materials. (12)

Photos of the site taken in June 1941 show picnic tables and swing sets constructed and ready for use (See Figure 7) (Pine Spur, 1941 Ashville Archives). The National Park Service never opened Pine Spur, most likely due to the limited parkway travel during World War II in 1942 and 1943. Administrators felt the park would be not be used enough to match the effort of opening it (Abbott, Annual Report 1942).

In 1946, Blue Ridge Parkway Superintendent Sam Weems wrote to the region one director to advance the development of Pine Spur with paving roads and picnic grounds (Weems, 18 March, 1946). By April 1946 Pine Spur's original plan was being discarded as Abbott wrote to Weems, "Your feeling and mine that it is idle under existing regulations to continue to think of Pine Spur as an all-Negro development parallels Mr. Emerson's opinion" (Abbott, 26 April, 1946). Blue Ridge Parkway Naturalist, William Lord's history of the Parkway was sent to the director of the National Park Service in 1954 stating that Pine Spur's development had been "deferred pending demonstrated need" (Harrington, 9 December, 1954). Parallel to the changing climate of race relations in America, Sam Weems fought unsuccessfully to complete the recreation area for use for both races in the 1960s and today only a few curb stones and rotting outhouses remain of Pine Spur (Quin 208, 209).

Many segregated areas were planned for the parkway, but only the remains of one can still be found at Doughton Park. The 1936 master plans show the motor service station at Doughton Park, then called Bluff Park, with segregated bathrooms (Blue Ridge Parkway Master Plan 1936, Bluff Park Service Station). The service station and coffee shop were not built until 1948 and segregated facilities had been abandoned by that time (Jaeger Company 46).

In 1941, a plan was drawn for segregated cabins, campgrounds, bathrooms and picnic areas for “Negroes” at Doughton Park (40). No evidence of the cabins can be found, but the picnic area still stands among the forest and ferns behind the coffee shop today (Jaeger Company 40; Hunter 75). (See figures 11 -19.) The “woods” picnic area, most likely number one picnic area, was planned for use by both blacks and whites, but “the meadows,” picnic area number three, was to be used only by whites (Jaeger 46). (See figure 20.) A study of African American use at Bluff Park was suggested by Abbott in a 1940 memorandum (June 28, 1940, 2). Still in 1943, a temporary Negro picnic area in the woods behind the future location of the coffee shop can be seen on the drawings of the 1943 Master Plans for Doughton Park (See Figure 10) (PKY-BR-BL-2051 January 1, 1943).

The coffee shop at Doughton Park opened in 1949 with Ellen Smith started as a waitress on opening day and 2009 marks her sixtieth season. When asked about segregation in the coffee shop and picnic area, she replied, “No segregation, all colors and everybody was welcome. No matter. They was all treated well” (Smith). (See figures 22-25.) So by 1949, seven years after the 1943 master plan showing a “Negro” picnic area at Doughton Park, all knowledge of segregation on the parkway had been forgotten or overlooked. The “woods” picnic area number one was suggested to be replaced with an amphitheater or fire circle at the year of scheduled abandonment in 1958 as reported by landscape architect Edward Abbuehl, but National Park Service Director Conrad Wirth did not approve of the location (Quin 239). The picnic area remained open until the late 1960s (239).

Other segregated areas at Otter Creek, Rocky Knob, and Fishers Peak were planned but never constructed (Quin 185, 214, 226; Abbott, June 20, 1942, 13). Otter Creek was proposed to be an all “Negro” area in 1939 with a lake for swimming and fishing, but by 1942 it was decided to expand the park for whites (Abbott, April 25, 1939, 3; Quin 185). Fishers Peak was also proposed to have a segregated lake with the north end for Negroes and south for whites (Abbott, April 7, 1939). Associate Engineer W.F. O’Neill noted in 1940 that the “Negro” beach was up stream from the white beach thus resulting “in the self-imposed exclusion of many white users” (Carnes, 10 June, 1940, 2). The memorandum states the solution:

It might be possible to correct this condition by placing the negro development on the east side of the lake near the lower end and provide access over the existing road shown on the drawing to be obliterated and moving the development for whites to the upper end of the lake on the west side. (Carnes, 10 June 10, 1940, 2)

This recreational area was never constructed and is now the site for the Blue Ridge Music Center (See Figure 1) (Quin 229). The 1936 master plans for Rocky Knob illustrate separate bathrooms for blacks at the Motor Service Station and Tea Room but it is unclear if these plans were constructed (See figure 26) (Blue Ridge Parkway Master Plan 1936, Rocky Knob).

Cumberland Knob, on the North Carolina and Virginia state line, was the first park to open in 1937 (Quin 230). Stanley Abbott proposed segregated picnic areas here in 1939 but the master plan drawings showed segregated bathrooms in 1938 and 1939 (See Figures 27 and 28) (Abbott, April 24, 1939; Cumberland Knob 1938). By 1940, segregated bathrooms were eliminated from the master plans, but in 1943 a Negro picnic area was planned at Cumberland Knob (See Figures 29 and 30) (Master Plan 1940 Cumberland Knob; PKY-BR-CK-5365 1943).

The Blue Ridge Parkway was not the only national park segregating recreation facilities. The Shenandoah National Park opened a segregated campground with cabins at Lewis Mountain in 1940 with planning for the campground beginning in 1937 (Engle 3). According to Elizabeth Hunter's 2006 article "Segregation's Long Shadow: Shenandoah National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway" in *Blue Ridge Country*, officials in Washington ordered all the Shenandoah's picnic grounds desegregated in 1941 but told the park's superintendent Ralph Lassiter not to publicize the changes (74). Though no evidence of official desegregation was found for the Blue Ridge Parkway, "Negro" facilities seemed to disappear after the U.S. entered World War II in 1941.

However, after the U.S. entered WWII, the master plan of 1943 still included plans for segregation at Doughton Park, Cumberland Knob, and Pine Spur. Parkway administrators were also still studying African American use with reported statistics reported in the annual reports of 1942, 1943, and 1944 which showed African American visitation at less than one percent and at half of one percent in 1942 (Abbott 1942, 1943, 1944).

Abbott mentions in several memoranda that studies would be made to justify accommodating African Americans on the parkway. For example, in a memorandum on 28 June 1940, Abbott wrote regarding posting signs in segregated areas: "No signs are to be erected except on stall doors within the comfort stations until further study has been made of this problem when the need becomes emphasized" (1). It appears parkway officials may have not continued Negro park development because they felt the areas would not be used enough to validate the money and effort put in to construct these parks.

Superintendent Sam Weems wrote to the regional director in March 1946 regarding the development of Pine Spur: "It is our belief that Pine Spur, one of our most attractive areas, will ultimately be open to the white visitors to justify its maintenance exclusively for that purpose" (Weems, 1946, 1). During the 1950s, segregation crept back into the parkway's view with a letter from U.S. Representative Tuck of Virginia who wrote to the NPS director Conrad Wirth stating, "The people of Virginia will not stand for integration in motels, and I hope that the National Park Service will not persist in any such program or practice" (Quin 170).

Research conducted by Dr. Anne Whisnant reveals further unrest about overnight accommodations for African Americans. DeHaven Hinkson M.D. wrote to Elmer F. Bennet of the Department of the Interior in December 1956, stating that Dr. Hinkson and his wife traveled through "the forest regions of Pennsylvania" in mid-October and wanted

to drive down through the Blue Ridge Mountains but were reluctant because of southern customs toward African Americans. They feared they would not be given adequate lodging and dining from privately own facilities (Hinkson). There is mention of a conference with the North Carolina Motel Association and the Department of Interior where Hinkson recommends this issue be addressed. Hinkson wrote "...colored motorists should have access to comfort and accomodations [sic] provided for the citizenry at large" (Hinkson). The outcome of conference of the NC Motel Association and the Department of the Interior has not been found.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 abolished segregation in public accommodations, employment, and education thus mandating the Blue Ridge Parkway and other National Parks to eliminate segregated facilities if not already (Horton 294). Study and analysis of the lost Negro Master Plan mentioned in a 1939 memorandum would be helpful in knowing the full details surrounding segregation and when it ended on the parkway. The Blue Ridge Parkway officials started thinking about integrating even before the Civil Rights Act with Pine Spur in 1946 noted in a memorandum dated April 26 (Abbott, 26 April 1946, 4). Segregation on the parkway seemed to be ignored after World War II; one reason may have been the Shenandoah Park order to desegregate in 1941 (Hunter 74).

Black construction workers on the parkway are difficult to document since the parkway was built piece by piece and by private contractors (Jolley, *That Magnificent* 67). Records of these men may have been kept by the construction companies but since it has been nearly 75 years since construction began on the parkway, these records may not exist anymore. African American employment as a park ranger or administrator in the 1940s would have been sparse because of Jim Crow laws and societal customs, although documentation of an unskilled African American worker was found in the National Archives. Stanley Abbott wrote 3 December 1942:

Memorandum for the Director:

We wish to advise that this office has no permanent negro personnel. However, we do have one negro who is employed as temporary unskilled labor. (Abbott, December 3, 1942)

After the Civil Rights Act in 1965, African Americans may have found it easier to be employed by the National Park Service and the parkway. Evidence of an African American park ranger near Mount Pisgah is found in a photo of Willie McDaniel taken in 1973 (See figures 31 and 32). Pictures of other African Americans are found in the parkway archives but it is hard to distinguish if the workers are, in fact, African American and where they are working. (See figures 33 - 36).

CCC Camp NP-29 Galax, Virginia

In the midst of the Great Depression one of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs for the unemployed was the Civilian Conservation Corps. Formed in 1933, continued to operate for nine years until 1942 (Jolley, *That Magnificent* 6, 128). This program put young men from ages 18 to 25 to work with public funds on conservation projects such as landscaping, forest culture, flood control, wildlife, and soil conservation (7; Cole 11). The men were paid \$30 a month with an allowance of five dollars to keep for themselves and the rest sent home to their families (Cole 11). In addition to "on-the-job" training in mechanics and carpentry, recreation and education were encouraged (45). This training was designed to prepare enrollees for jobs after leaving the CCC (47). Some camps had baseball and basketball games or boxing matches after their day's work was finished. Almost every camp published a newspaper about camp happenings written by enrollees (45).

CCC Camps were placed near the Blue Ridge Parkway so that enrollees carried to work on landscaping, erosion control, installation of guard rails, fire prevention, and forest conservation (Jolley, *That Magnificent* 65). Resident landscape architect and parkway superintendent Stanley Abbott requested nine camps in 1937 for the parkway but was granted only four, three in Virginia and one in North Carolina (65). CCC camps on the Virginia section of the parkway were at Rocky Knob Park NP-14, Kelso NP-15 and NP-29 near Galax (65). The only North Carolina CCC camp to work on the parkway was NP-21 near Laurel Springs in Alleghany County (65). (See figure 37.) In 1934 the War Department issued a statement condoning the segregation of CCC camps: "Colored personnel will be employed to the greatest extent practical in colored units within their own states of origin," even though the CCC was established under a clause that "prohibited discrimination based on race" (Jolley, *That Magnificent* 102; Cole 13). According to Harley Jolley's book *That Magnificent Army of Youth and Peace: the Civilian Conservation Corps in North Carolina-1942*, over 350,000 African Americans served in the CCC during its nine year establishment (Jolley 102). (See Figure 38).

NP-29 near Galax was an African American CCC Camp (*Blue Ridge Parkway News No. 3, 1942, 2*). *The Blue Ridge Parkway Newsletter*, published to inform locals about the progress of the parkway, published an article in the April, May, June, July edition in 1942 stating that the CCC Camp near Galax "composed of Negro boys" would be closing (2). The exact location of this particular camp is uncertain as it has been listed at Fishers Peak, Piper's Gap, and mentioned in a book written about the Baywood area of Virginia ("CCC and the NPS" 1; "Virginia: CCC Legacy" 3; Davis 217).

According to the "CCC Legacy Alumni" website, the camp was established 4 December 1940, sixteen miles southeast of Galax with the name "Camp Piper's Gap" (3). Pat Davis's book *Baywood* chronicles the history of the community of Baywood, Virginia, seven miles southwest of Galax and includes pictures of a CCC camp on page 217 which might have been NP-29. (See figure 39.) Neither the National Park Service nor the CCC lists a camp at Baywood. In a 2006 letter to Laura Bryant of the Galax Carroll Regional Library, Emma Phipps of Mouth of Wilson, Virginia, wrote the camp "was housed on or

near the Hurley H. Hampton Farm, off old U.S. 58, in the Hampton Valley area" (1). Ted Tillman recounts the camp being in an open field to the left near road 207 off the Blue Ridge Parkway, where tents were erected for enrollees (1). Piper's Gap is listed at milepost 206 (Lord, 1976, 200). An unknown author of a note found among NP-29 records at the Blue Ridge Parkway Archives states, "Galax, Va. NP-29-Va. 16 miles east by south from Galax, road markers are not as shown on road maps. Best plan is to inquire for specific directions at Galax" (1). A memorandum from the 1986 Blue Ridge Parkway superintendent, Gary Everhardt, places the camp between milepost 207 and 207.1 on the parkway (Everhardt).

A camp inspection record from 5 June 1941 provides specific and detailed information about activities and personnel at the camp (Civilian Conservation Corps 1). The company commander was George L. Harwick with Wilbur I. McGhee as camp superintendent (1). The company number was 362 with 180 black enrollees (1). Buildings were fully assembled by this time with the inspector ranking them as "good" (2). The report states that "all work being performed or contemplated is landscaping undifferentiated on this section of the Blue Ridge Parkway" (3). (See figures 40 and 41.)

Records from the camp have provided much insight into the daily lives of the men at NP-29. Subjects for instruction for enrollees while at camp are listed as reading and writing, arithmetic, English, history, journalism, office practices, truck driving, and among others, table waiting (6). Four nights were devoted to educational classes every week at the camp with nine high school graduates, 51 enrollees on high school level, and 36 illiterates (6). A library with 856 books and current magazines was available to the men, but no newspapers were available and it has been reported that the library reading room was "fully used" (Everhardt 2). The same report also notes a "sound-silent projection machine" was available for movies as were pool tables, ping pong, checkers, and cards. For recreation, enrollees played baseball on a field they graded and built themselves. They arranged themselves in two leagues, the Barracks League and the Company Team (Everhardt 2). On Saturday nights the men would travel to Mt. Airy, North Carolina (Civilian Conservation Corps 8). Reverend Joseph E. Snyder, District CCC Chaplain, conducted religious services three times a month with Reverend H.R. Williams of Galax visiting enrollees every Sunday (8).

Records show that the food was considered "better than satisfactory" with pastries baked in camp (Everhardt 2). Some of the cooks were trained at the School for Cooks and Bakers in Pennsylvania. At Camp Piper's Gap, the amount of meat was minimal compared to other camps, but the amount of milk and fresh fruit was "twice the amount served to the average company" (Everhardt 2).

Despite the idyllic images these facts may create, other documents provide insight into the more difficult side of daily camp life. Around the date of the June 5 inspection, a memorandum was sent from a Mr. Brown to a Mr. McKinney June 3, 1941 (Civilian Conservation Corps 1). This note states an investigation should be pursued following a filed complaint:

On a very good authority it has been brought to my attention that William P. Wynn, subaltern at camp NP-29, Galax, Virginia, has created a situation bordering on insurrection among the enrollees. It is said that the occasion for this unrest has resulted from abusive tactics over a long period of time and recently following the discharge of one enrollee, Abraham Adams. It appears that this situation should receive immediate investigation.
(Brown 1)

A summary of the investigation was sent out 20 June 1941, after the investigation on June 14 (Memorandum for Files 1). On May 30 Subaltern Wynn said he "had trouble" with offensive conduct of enrollee Abraham Adams and ordered him to leave the camp with an escort to the nearest town. Later that evening Adams returned to the camp and confronted Wynn. Adams refused to remove his hand from his back pocket and at that moment Wynn struck Adams with his fist. When Adams fell to the ground, an open jack knife was revealed in the concealed hand. Adams "walked out of the camp and did not return" (1). A statement about Adams and Wynn's relationship from the educational adviser, Clarence J. Grinnell, reads, "He [Grinnell] had heard that Officer Wynn picked on enrollee Adams" (2). Conclusions included in this memorandum were:

- A. The camp was inspected thoroughly and found to be in first class order.
- B. The mess is inspected and found to be highly satisfactory.
- C. The morale of the company is good.
- D. It is felt that the action of the officer was not proper, but under the circumstances, he may have been justified.
- E. It is felt that the Educational Adviser is actuated by racial inclination and may have been in disagreement with camp officers.
- F. No further action in this matter is necessary. ("Memorandum for the Files" 20 June 1941)

Special investigator Ross Abare discussed a different incident in the document "Relative to Camp NP-29, Galax, Virginia" written 5 June 1941 (1). This document recounts a disturbance on June 4 between a cook and officer on a job site at noon-day meal time resulting in the discharge of three men (1). Attached are testimonies and eye-witness accounts of the events. As a result of the disturbance three men were discharged (1). Abare comments, "It is the first time that I know of that a colored company has been placed so far west in Virginia and I understand that putting this company in this location was something in the nature of an experiment" (1).

In the eye-witness account of W.H. Underwood, Park Service Foreman, recorded 4 June 1941, enrollee Theodore Bailey was serving food to the crew when Leader Joseph Johnson hit Bailey on the nose "causing it to bleed." The cause of the incident was presumed to be because of the poor quality of the food (Underwood 1). Underwood believed the incident to be prearranged (1). Senior Forman for the camp, George D. Bowers, stated that two enrollees, Walter McGeorge and Frank Mitchell, pulled two containers of food off the truck that carried the food to the crew, causing them to spill at the time Bailey was hit (Bowers 1). Bowers further states that "the food sent out was

satisfactory as to quantity and quality" (1). Although it is never specified whether officers of the camp were white or black, many black camps were operated by white officers (Jolley, *That Magnificent* 103).

James Waller, a camp enrollee, was helping Bailey serve the food in the field on June 4, and heard Johnson say he didn't like the food and saw Johnson hit Bailey on the nose (Waller 1). Waller recounts, "Then Walter McGeorge and Frank Mitchell pulled the beans and the jam off the truck, spilling them on the ground" (1). Theodore Bailey's testimony states:

On June 4, 1941, I was second cook on shift at the noon meal and went out with the dinner truck to serve the food to the men. When we got to Mr. Underwood's crew, Joseph Johnson got on the truck and asked where the salt was and I told him, and he said he didn't like it. He then asked where the salt was and I told him the salt was where it always was, in the front of the truck. Then he swore at me and hit me on the nose, causing it to bleed and knocking me against the side of the truck. Then Walter McGeorge and Frank Mitchell pulled some of the food off the truck and spilled it on the ground. Mr. Underwood broke up the gathering and we served the rest of the men. (Bailey 1)

Underwood tried to question Johnson about his behavior but Johnson would not respond (Underwood 1). Nowhere in these documents does it indicate which men were discharged.

A note of warning was sent by special investigator Neill McL. Coney, Jr., to the CCC Assistant Director, Charles Kenlan, on 28 November 1940, just days before the Galax camp opened, cautioning the placement of a Negro camp in the area (1). Coney wrote:

It is believed that this movement should be very carefully considered since the Negro population of the area surrounding the camp site, which is mountainous is very slight, and there appear to be reliable reports of definite hostility on the part of the local community to the location of a Negro camp in its midst. It is thought that if the situation is hostile, very serious consequences may result. (1)

Many African American camps around the country faced this dilemma of community acceptance. Many county and community officials wrote to the governor or other state administrators opposing the placement of African American camps in their communities due to insufficient facilities for African Americans or too small of an existing black population (Jolley, *That Magnificent* 112, 113). For example, the superintendent of schools in Surry County, North Carolina, wrote in 1938 to Governor Clyde Hoey opposing a "Negro" camp at Hancock citing, "Poor education and social activities for caring for Negroes. Unanimous sentiment of the county as a whole" (113). Thus, young African American men working on the parkway in CCC Camp NP-29 faced obstacles that went far beyond landscaping the difficult terrain. These accounts illustrate the lack of diversity in

rural mountain towns as a result of a very small population of African American citizens and the corresponding inexperience of their majority white neighbors with minority populations leading to animosity and tensions between the two.

While the CCC did not directly build the parkway, the camps aided in the beautification of the landscapes and forests that are seen today. The Piper's Gap CCC Camp at Galax closed sometime between April and July 1942, according to *The Blue Ridge Parkway News* (2). It was the second CCC camp to close on the parkway, Rocky Knob being the first in the fall 1941 (2). The enrollees today would be in their late 80s and early 90s. Knowledge of one living member was reported in 2006 by Emma Phipps in a letter to the Galax Carroll Regional Library stating that Glenn Williams, member of CCC camp NP-29, is still in Carroll County (Phipps 2). According to the Historical American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, NP-29 worked on restoring Mabry Mill, completing the project in September 1942, working under the supervision of parkway landscape architect Kenneth G. McCarter (Quin 220).

Further investigation of Mabry Mill records and monthly progress reports is needed to determine the validity of the work of men of NP-29 on that site. A Civilian Public Service Camp replaced the CCC on 23 May 1942, as Superintendent W. I. McGhee stayed behind to help start the camp (*Blue Ridge Parkway News* 2; Gingerich 3). The CPS-39 camp closed in 1943 on May 17 (Gingerich 3). By 1944, Sam Weems was the parkway's superintendent, and he wrote in the Annual Report of 1944: "The buildings from abandoned CPS-39 near Galax, Virginia, were disposed of and removed by the U.S. Coast Guard" (2). Thus, the only physical evidence of a CCC camp in Galax may have been lost.

African American Communities on the Blue Ridge Parkway

The relationship between African Americans and the Blue Ridge Parkway first began when bulldozers, picks, and shovels began to slowly carve a path for the beginning of the parkway in the late 1930's. Not only did "the scenic" uncover spectacular views as it inched its way across Virginia and North Carolina, but it also shed light on remote African American communities rich in tradition and culture reaching back to the days of slavery. Evidence of these flourishing communities on and around the parkway is clearly seen through existing slave and free American Americans cemeteries, remaining homesteads, historical parkway documents, and oral histories. One major study, The Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project conducted in 1978 by Dr. Patrick Mullen and a team of cultural specialists, has been instrumental in chronicling the history of African Americans along the parkway (Fleischhauer 2).

The 1940 Census reports that about 980,000 African Americans were living in North Carolina and 660,000 were living in Virginia. A small number of these could be found in communities in the Blue Ridge Mountains (US Census Bureau). Several African American communities have been studied on a seventy-mile stretch of the Blue Ridge Parkway around the North Carolina and Virginia state line area (Fleischhauer 2). The Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project focused on the people of this region and their way of life. This study greatly aids the parkway in interpreting sites and local culture along the parkway for the millions of visitors that come from across the country, as the final report states, "The Parkway's responsibilities, therefore, are to be an understanding neighbor to the citizens who live nearby, and to interpret folklife sympathetically and accurately for visitors" (5).

The team of folklorists preserved white as well as African American folkways through recorded interviews, photos, and video. One of Dr. Mullen's foci during this project was on African Americans and religion. The communities he studied in depth were Ararat, Virginia, and Sparta, North Carolina. Mullen's study centered on several African American churches including the New Covenant Baptist Association which encompasses thirteen black churches (Sexton 117). Black churches studied were Clarks Creek Progressive Primitive Baptist and Ararat Baptist, both in Ararat, Virginia, Redmond Creek Baptist near Galax, Virginia, and Macedonia Union Baptist in Sparta, North Carolina. Audio recordings of these churches from 1978 have been reproduced on an album entitled *Children of the Heav'nly King: Religious Expression in the Central Blue Ridge*.

Dr. Mullen's work documents faith communities that have deep roots and powerful rituals. A testimony, hymn and sermon are featured in this recording from Clarks Creek Progressive Primitive Baptist near Ararat, Virginia, about ten miles from the parkway (See figure 42). The other African American church featured on this recording is Macedonia Union Baptist Church near Sparta, North Carolina, about five miles from the parkway (See figure 43). In this recording the hymn "Down By the River" is heard followed by a prayer. Mamie and Leonard Bryan are from Sparta and attended Macedonia Union Baptist (Mullen 1992, 89). Leonard told the story of his religious conversion on this recording claiming he was "as wild as a buck" (Mullen 1992, 90) (See figure 44). The recording preserves not

only the religious fervor of the participants, but the colorful language and the sound of the voices that give these communities their unique flavor.

Mullen's Blue Ridge Folklife Project also documents quilting, medical folklore, foodways, and agricultural folklore of the African American communities. Mullen recorded interviews with several black residents around the parkway including Dean Gambill, Lizzie and Lester Carter, Mamie and Leonard Bryan, Jesse Hatcher, Sabe and Estelle Choate, Walter and Vivian Brown, and McKinley and Birdie Brim. These interviews are kept at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Unfortunately, the tapes of the interviews are disintegrating and insufficient funds for the preservation process have prevented listening to these valuable interviews.

The first African American Mullen encountered was Thelma Warden Carter whose grandparents were Indians from the region. She moved to Ararat, Virginia, in 1931. According to Mullen's field notes, the Carters are the oldest black family in the area. Another black family in the Ararat community is the Brim family descending from Jack Brim, a white slave holder who had two African American wives. Thelma's daughter, Sharon Carter, was the only African American teacher at the Blue Ridge Elementary School at Ararat at the time of the interview in 1978. Sharon told Mullen race relations were good both in the Ararat Community and at school (Mullen 1978).

Through the interviews in the study, the fieldworkers uncovered just how influential and complicated slave heritage can be where names are concerned. Minerva Stewart was a Carter before she married, and her grandfather on her father's side was a Brim but her father, Anderson, took the Carter name. Slaves most likely took the last name of their masters once freed so if a slave had been sold from a Brim to a Carter this theory could explain Minerva's last name. Minerva's sisters are Birdie Brim and Ora Stickland. Harry Epperson, a white man from Ararat, told Mullen of Anderson Carter's reputation for curing animals. Epperson consulted Carter for a cure for maggots in a cow's horn and Carter prescribed warm honey which worked. Minerva's brother, Lester, and Epperson are "terrible good friends" as she told Mullen 11 August 1978. This interaction illustrates black and white relations in the Ararat community and folk medicine practices (Mullen 1978).

Jesse Hatcher was a deacon at Clarks Creek Progressive Church and his grandfather was one of the founding members in Ararat, Virginia. At the time of the study in 1978, Deacon Hatcher was 88 years old, having been born to former slaves in Patrick County, Virginia. Evidence of black and white brotherhood among the Ararat churches is seen through an instance when Clarks Creek Church burned. Fred Brim told Mullen three white churches immediately called and offered their churches for services. Mullen wrote that Deacon Hatcher knew much of the history of Clarks Creek Church starting from when worship services were held under a white oak tree on property given to slaves with the intention having a slave cemetery in Green's Old Field. Deacon Hatcher lived alone and Mullen notes that his white neighbors looked after him (Mullen 1978).

The Choates, Bryans, Gambills and Browns were from Alleghany County near Sparta and all attended Macedonia Union Baptist Church except for Dean Gambill, who attended the Primitive Baptist Church. Mullen's field notes indicate that Dean Gambill of Sparta, North Carolina, worked on the Blue Ridge Parkway along with many other jobs including coal mining in West Virginia, carrying the mail, and clerking for the Sparta General Store. Gambill's parents separated when he was eight years-old and he was raised by a white man named Jack Willey (Mullen 1978). The book *Baywood*, by Patricia Davis, mentions that few black people went to work on the parkway in the 1930s when it was being built (240).

Photos of the black churches and community members Dr. Mullen studied have been requested and are in the process of being copied at the American Folklife Center. Along with Dr. Mullen's field notes, final report, photos, and interview tapes, the Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project study also includes video footage of flat foot dancing, apple pressing, and music performances. Also documented on video are students from the Blue Ridge Elementary School in Ararat, Virginia. Dr. Mullen directed this portion of the project asking black and white children for jokes or stories about sledding, Halloween, or games the children played. The footage showed black and white children interacting and even playing clapping games.

Further evidence of African American heritage along the parkway is found through the Blue Ridge Parkway Archives in Asheville, North Carolina. Correspondence in 1950 concerning the parkway overlook sign of "Negro Mountain" at parkway milepost 266.8 in Ashe County near West Jefferson includes discussion of a name change for the overlook sign. Researcher William S. Powell wrote to William Lord 17 May 1950 about the sign change:

I understand that a number of citizens in the vicinity of Jefferson in Ashe County, North Carolina, have become disturbed over the fact that a sign on the Parkway marked "Negro Mountain Overlook" has been changed to "Phoenix Mountain Overlook." They state that the point where the sign is located Phoenix Mountain is almost obscured by the mountain generally known as "Nigger Mountain." (Powell 1)

The mountain is believed to have been named "Negro Mountain" because runaway slaves would hide there on their way north (Powell 2). Eula Todd of Ashe County wrote 9 May 1950: "The cave in the mountain furnished refuge for runaway slave" (1). Sam Weems wrote to the editor of the *Skyline Post* in West Jefferson explaining what will replace the "Phoenix Mountain Over Look" sign to inform concerned citizens. The new sign would read:

During revolutionary war days an escaped slave sought refuge in a cave high on the mountain's south slope. He was discovered and returned to his master. Later, the mountain provided shelter for slaves headed North along the vague and secretive "Underground Railway." (Weems, *Skyline Post* 1)

Today, the sign reads:

Mount Jefferson looms high over the town of Jefferson for which it is named. It was formerly called Negro Mountain because run-away slaves supposedly hid out there while fleeing North. The summit and slopes of the mountain now make up Mount Jefferson State Park. Covering 474 acres.
(Mount Jefferson Overlook Sign)

While acquiring land for the parkway, superintendent Stanley Abbot met a former slave, Lizzie Price who lived near the Pine Spur Gap Area at milepost 144 (Lord, 1976, 139). Price was born a slave in 1845 below the mountains, and in 1865 she had her first child (Lord, 1981). Price moved to Pine Spur to start farming and raising her family with her husband (1981). In a 1958 interview with Herbert Evison, Abbott remembers taking the check to Lizzie's house to pay her for her land:

'Well, Aunt Lizzie,' I asked, 'what are you going to do with this?'
She sat there smoking her pipe – 100 years old.
'Well, you know, Mr. Abbott, it seems to me that what I is first goin' to do is to go get me George Washington rough-cut tobacco fer this pipe of mine.' (Abbott, 1958, 31)

Aunt Lizzie Price lived to be 108 years old (Lord, 1981). Sam Weems photographed Price, her son and daughter-in-law in 1953 at the age of 106 (See Figure 48). Interestingly, Pine Spur is the area where the Negro Recreation Area was partially constructed.

Slaves may have also been present at Humpback Mountain, near milepost 5, as a letter from Sam Weems to the editor of the *Waynesboro News Virginian*, Louis Spilman stated the stone fences were "built by slaves to contain livestock, mainly hogs" (Weems, 3 February 1947, 1). (See Figure 49.) The date of construction of the fences was the early 1800s. The height of the wall was increased each year as the task was considered a "winter job" for the slaves. Weems states the information given was offered by Alfred Percy of Madison Heights, Virginia (1).

The parkway and its remote areas are not only home to blacks and whites. The community of Irish Creek in Rockbridge County, Virginia, near milepost 37 is mentioned in a letter to a "Bill" of Bedford, Virginia, from Leo F. Goeller. (See Figure 49.) Goeller explained the "isha" people in the community are a mixture of white, Indian, and "Negro." He said indentured servants ran away from Tidewater masters to be free in the mountains. Their children were called "free issues" and then "issues" and finally the name was shortened to "isha" (Goeller 1). The document is dated 13 November 1949, but Goeller said he first met the "isha" people in 1930. He warns "Bill" to not "mention negro blood when you are among them. They are touchy about it. Ask some of the white folks who live in the nearest villages" (Goeller 1).

Cemeteries provide important clues to the history of African American communities. Several cemeteries rest along the parkway with the most notable at

Meadows of Dan, Virginia, at milepost 177.7 beside the Meadows of Dan Church's cemetery. The number of burials is estimated between eight and ten since the original markers no longer exist. Matt Burnett, owner of the property before the parkway was built was not sure whether the cemetery was of slaves or free blacks after the Civil War. The area was mowed after the parkway bought it and the markers were lost. The graves are near the Langhorne family on the oldest side of the Meadows of Dan Church Cemetery. The Langhorne Family was only one of five families in the area to own slaves. Speculation has been made that in the instance of small family slave owners, the slaves would be buried next to the white family (See figure 50). (*Guidelines for Maintenance*, June 25, 1979).

Two other cemeteries believed to have graves of slaves or free blacks are at Peaks of Otter and Pine Spur Gap. In an interview circa 1960s, Charlie Johnson, great-grandson of Castleton Johnson of the Peaks community, claims there was a slave cemetery above the Peaks of Otter Visitors' Center. It is probable that all graves outside of the stone wall were African Americans and most likely slaves although within the last 75 years burials had been made in this cemetery. Dick Gross is referenced to have two grandchildren and a son buried there. These graves may be enclosed by a wooden fence. Dick Gross' race is unknown. The Pine Spur Negro Cemetery can be found at milepost 144.8. In 2001, trustees of the cemetery were appointed including Chester Stuart, Winifred Beale, and Bruce A. Turner. Research on a black confederate soldier, Humphrey Claytor, suggests that he was buried in this cemetery. (Brown Memorandum, 9 January 2001). Pine Spur was also home to 108 year old Lizzie Price and the site for the Pine Spur Negro Recreation Area (see 1940 map, figure 51).

A few surviving homesteads help interpret life in the mountains for the African American farmer. The Peaks of Otter resort at milepost 85 has deep, substantial roots as an African American community. Saunders Farm is located near the Peaks of Otter hotel and lake. The farm was owned by the black Saunders family. George Saunders is believed to have started living on the farm in 1905 when he married Bertie Pearl Ross (Jones 6). George and Bertie raised nine children in their homestead near Peaks of Otter in Bedford County, Virginia, off Highway 43 (6, 23) (See figures 45 and 46). The Saunders Farm included a homestead, meat house, chicken house, and corn house with only the meat house standing today (7). In 1942, the Saunders sold the farm to the Federal Government for \$2000 (8). The Saunders family moved to Thaxton, Virginia, in 1940 or 1941 where Bertie died in 1961 and George died in 1969 (8). Many of the original buildings from the farm still remain, but in order for the public to be able to access the farm, stabilization is necessary along with additional historical research and restoration (49).

Another farm near Peaks of Otter owned by white farmers was the Johnson Farm (Johnson 32). Photo archives of the Blue Ridge Parkway include two photos of Lon Swain, an African American worker, who helped at the Johnson Farm around 1960 and 1970 (See figure 52). Much further down the parkway in North Carolina, Harley Jolley wrote to parkway superintendent Gary Everhardt in 1982 with information about a field at Linville Falls where houses stood that were inhabited by "Negroes." The letter says this field was planned for the new Linville Falls Visitors' Center sewage (Jolley, 1982, 2).

African Americans have also fulfilled the role of servant or entertainer to the very wealthy along the parkway. A note written in 1981 found in the Cone papers at the Blue Ridge Parkway Archives documents a visit to the Cone Manor at mile post 294, near Blowing Rock, North Carolina, by an elderly black woman, Georgia Dula, from New York City. Cone Manor was the summer home of the denim manufacturer, Moses Cone, from Baltimore, Maryland. This note claims that Dula's father, Edmund, worked for the Cones as a surry driver and said they were the only colored family on the estate. Other details given, along with her address, were that her mother, Laura Dula, was a servant for the Cones, a dog named Fluffy was buried at Flat Top, and all the children were given rides on a boat at Bass Lake before the Cones returned to Baltimore (Note, 21 August 1981).

Anne Whisnant in her book *Super-Scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History* wrote about the Hotel Mons complex at Peaks of Otter, where in the 1920s guests could "dance to the music of a 'bouncy jazz pianist' (possibly and African American man from Bedford named Tiny Johnson) who frequently entertained at the hotel" (224). Also at the Hotel Mons, Mabel Swain, daughter of George and Betty Saunders, worked as a waitress sometime before it was torn down in 1939 (Swain 2, 4 ; Whisnant 245).

Recommendations for Further Research

Much more research on African Americans and the parkway is critical for the full understanding and preservation of the relationship between the two. More information on the following subjects can be found through active research:

Segregation

1. **Negro Master Plan:** The plan was mentioned in a 1939 parkway document by Robert G. Hall, associate landscape architect, who was responsible for all the master plans and supervised the construction of all developed areas including picnic grounds, camp grounds, and trails. Finding more about Hall may prove valuable and may lead to documents about Pine Spur and other segregated recreation areas.
2. **Master Plans of Recreation Parks:** Known segregated facilities such as Rocky Knob, Doughton (Bluff) Park, Smart View, and Cumberland Knob could be further studied by examining the master plans of these parks through 1950s or through 1965 when segregation was abolished throughout the country.
3. **National Park Service and Blue Ridge Parkway Segregation Policies:** It is unclear whether the parkway had its own segregation policies or if the National Park Service mandated the segregation on the parkway. Concrete information about this issue may lead to other information about when segregation was officially abandoned on the parkway. This research may be best conducted at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.
4. **Pine Spur:** This recreation site should be visited and documented with pictures of existing structures, if any. This site could be an ideal location to commemorate African Americans on the parkway as it was the site of the greatest effort to accommodate African Americans on the parkway and the site of an African American cemetery is located there.
5. **Contacting Past and Present Park Rangers:** The park rangers may know more about or have experienced segregation on the parkway. Locating and interviewing these rangers would serve as a valuable addition to this study.
6. **African American Tourist Publications:** Finding tourist information published by the National Park Service for African Americans, if any, could pinpoint specific areas, not only on the parkway but across the country, that were segregated and in what year.

CCC Camp NP-29 Galax, Virginia

1. **List of enrollees:** Documents of the roll of the members of the camp may be kept in the National Archives or if still existing, the Civilian Conservation Corps headquarters or office. Virginia state archives may have this information. The National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri may also have these files.

2. Oral Histories from CCC enrollees at NP-29: Finding living members of NP-29 would be difficult but could be possible as many of the men could be in their late 80s or 90s in 2009. These oral histories would provide information about camp life, how they were treated, and what work was done on the parkway.
3. Newspaper Archives of Virginia: Newspapers from Galax could contain article updates about what the CCC was doing on the parkway. *The Galax Gazette*'s archives start in the 1970s, thus the state archives may be the best source.
4. Civilian Public Service Camp 39: After the CCC camp was closed a CPS camp was moved into the camp grounds. Further research may uncover whether any enrollees stayed behind to work in the camp and what work was done by the CPS in Galax, Virginia.
5. CCC NP-29 Mabry Mill Construction: The HABS HAER report of 1997 states that CCC camp NP-29 finished construction on Mabry Mill in the fall of 1942. Other documents show the camp closed in May 1942. The camp company worked under landscape architect Kenneth G. McCarter. Documents from Carter, the CCC camp, or about the construction of Mabry Mill may clarify this matter.
6. The CCC camp newspaper: Each camp published a newspaper chronicling camp events and progress. Having these papers could explain much about camp life and progress of work. Locating this camp's paper may be difficult since copies of NP-29's newspaper are not in the Center for Research Libraries CCC camp papers database located in Chicago, Illinois. It is rumored that some papers were sent to Idaho State Historical Society in Boise and Nebraska State Historical Society in Lincoln.

African American Communities

1. Oral Histories of Men Who Constructed the Parkway: Since the parkway was built by private contractors, the parkway has no employee list of who constructed the road. Since the parkway passes through many African American communities, studies may be conducted in these communities to find African Americans or relatives who worked on the parkway. Bedford and Roanoke counties are both about 20 miles from the parkway and have long had substantial African-Americans communities where former workers may be identified.
2. African American Churches: Many African-American churches are located around the parkway as the Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Study illustrates. Contacting these churches may be a valuable resource for African Americans who used or worked on the parkway.
3. The "Isha" People: More information about the "isha" people in Irish Creek, Virginia would complement the existing African American history on the parkway. Visiting the area may be the first step in uncovering more information.

4. The African American Johnson Family and Farm: There are rumors that there were two Johnson Farms near Peaks of Otter and one was owned by an African American family. More research into this issue would be needed to confirm this speculation.

5. Blue Ridge Parkway Folklife Project: The tapes of interviews Dr. Patrick Mullen collected are being damaged in storage at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, thus making the tapes unusable. Listening to the interviews of the black people he interviewed would provide a window into their way of life, but now they could be lost. Preservation processes must be undertaken to make these tapes usable.

6. Possum Hollow: An African American community on Possum Hollow Road outside of Blowing Rock, North Carolina may be a valuable resource for African Americans around the Cone Manor and parkway.

7. Little Switzerland: Dr. Anne Whisnant wrote about the racial unrest at Little Switzerland in *Super-Scenic Motorway: A Blue Ridge Parkway History* on page 166. More information about this situation would be a good addition to the understanding of race relations in the Appalachian region.

Contacts

Scholars, Professors, and Professionals

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Ian Firth – retired professor of history at U of Georgia. Author of *Parkway Historic Resource Study*.
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Chapel Hill, NC 27516
Home: 919-968-4259
Cell: 919-618-8026

Joe Wilson – Blue Ridge Music Center [former program director]
joe@ncta.net

African Americans in the Community

John Miller – retired African American Teacher at Northwest Ashe High School.
336-877-4232
589 Liberty Grove Church Road
Fleetwood, NC

Reverend Curtis Wolfe – African American Preacher in Ashe County, born in 1928
336-982-2740
Hudlertown Road
Crumpler, NC

Persons of Interest – Suggested by Ted Coyle

Richard J. Greth – letter sent to Jackie Holt July 26, 1996. CCC worker for the Parkway.
Phone and Address as of 7/26/96
610-376-7058
148 Clymer St
Reading, PA 19602
Phone and Address as of 7/7/09 from Google Phone Book
610-376-0276
1537 Birch St.
Reading PA, 19604

Roy Stuart – elderly, long history in Pine Spur area.
614 Stuart Rd.
Copper Hill, VA

Bruce Turner – African American officer at Floyd’s Sheriff’s Department. Board of Directors for Blue Ridge Cemetery.

209 New Town Road
Floyd, VA 24091

JD Walker – Knowledgeable about the local African American community

5667 Floyd Hwy
Floyd, VA 24091
540-651-4020

Gino Williams – former mayor of Floyd and lawyer. Drafted documents for the Blue Ridge Cemetery.

PO Box 545
Floyd, VA 24091

Churches of Interest

Redmonds Creek Baptist
Grayson County, VA

Ararat Baptist
Patrick County
Ararat, VA

Clarks Creek Progressive Primitive Baptist
11 Squirrel Creek Rd
Ararat, VA 24053
(276) 251-1631

Macedonia Union Baptist
Sheila Bryan
336-372-2092
770 Laurel Glen Church Road
Sparta, NC 28675

Antioch Baptist Church
540-586-5399
7184 Wheats Valley Road
Bedford, VA 24523

Pleasant Hill Baptist
113 and Mabe Dairy Rd., Laurel Springs, NC
Mail: 147 Sweet Hollow Rd, Laurel Springs, NC 28644
Pastor: Rev. Curtis Wolfe 336-982-2740
Contact: Salley Moxley 336-359-2922

White Plains Union Baptist
455 New Haven Church Rd., Sparta, NC 28675
Mail: P.O. Box 413, Sparta, NC 28675
Pastor: Rev. Curtis Wolfe 336-982-4176
Contact: Charity Gambill-Gwyn 336-372-2775

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Drawings/Maps

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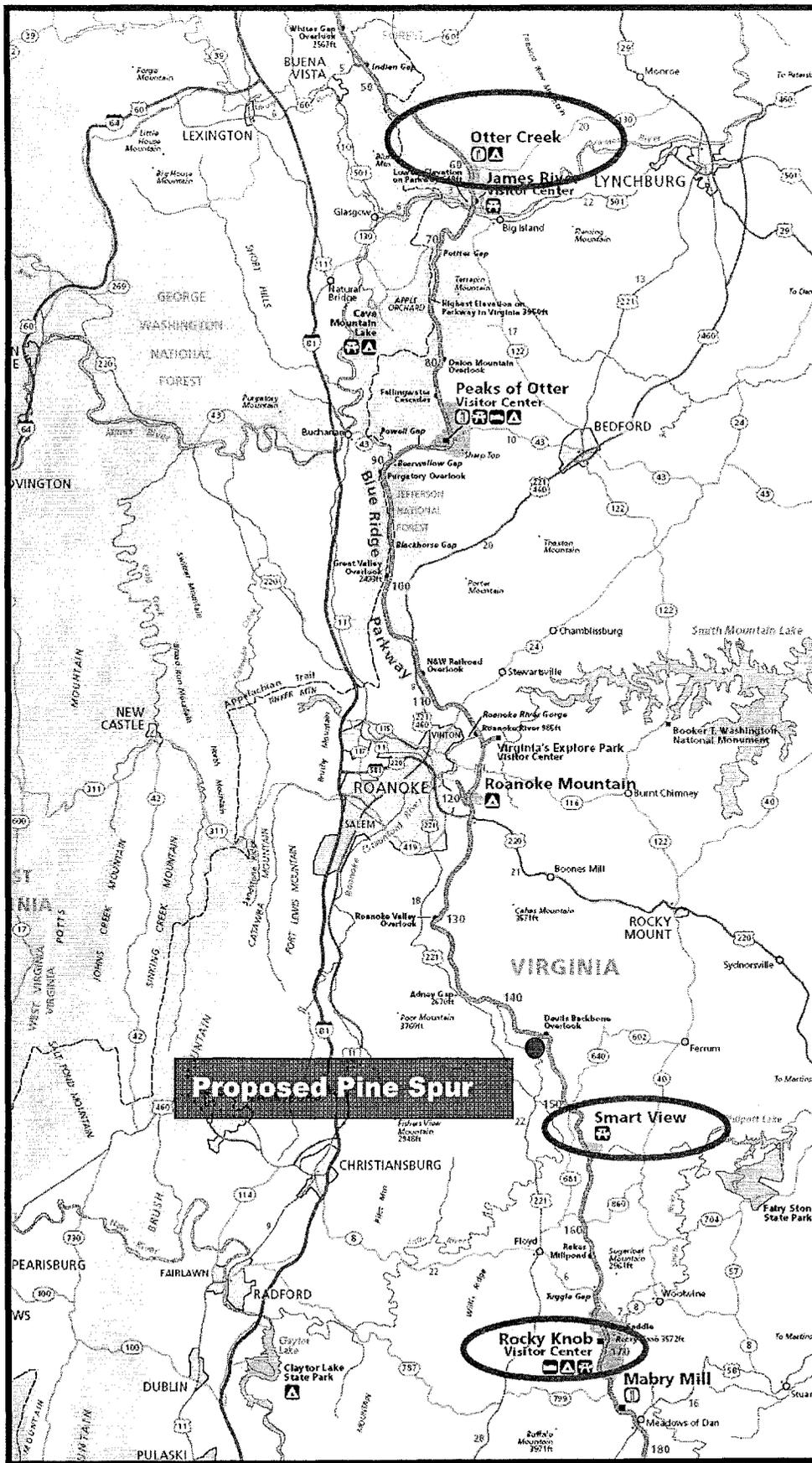


Figure 1 – Virginia parks planned for segregation: Otter Creek, Rocky Knob, Smart View and Pine Spur

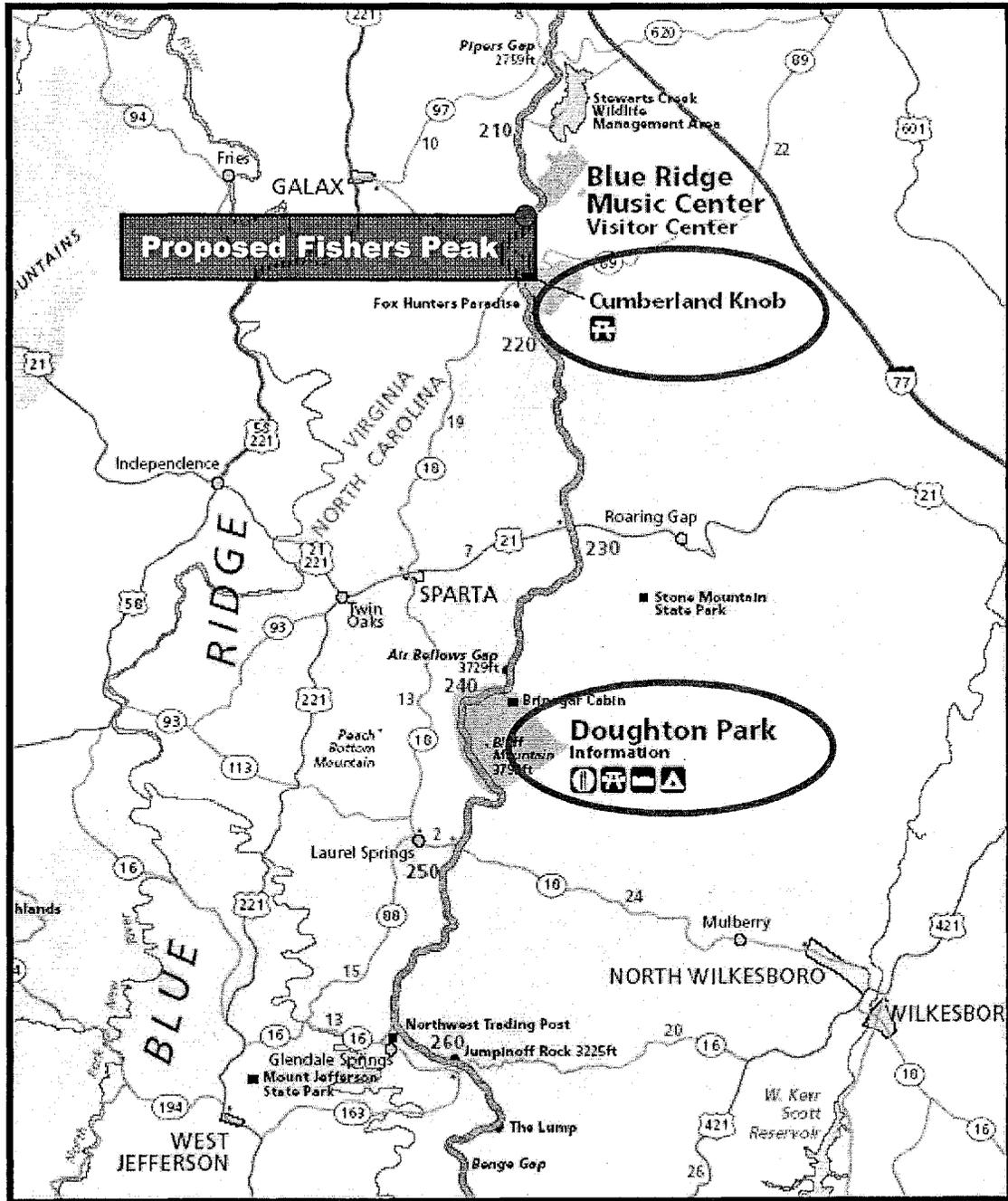


Figure 2 – Location of North Carolina parks planned for segregation: Doughton Park, Cumberland Knob, and Fishers Peak (now the Blue Ridge Music Center).

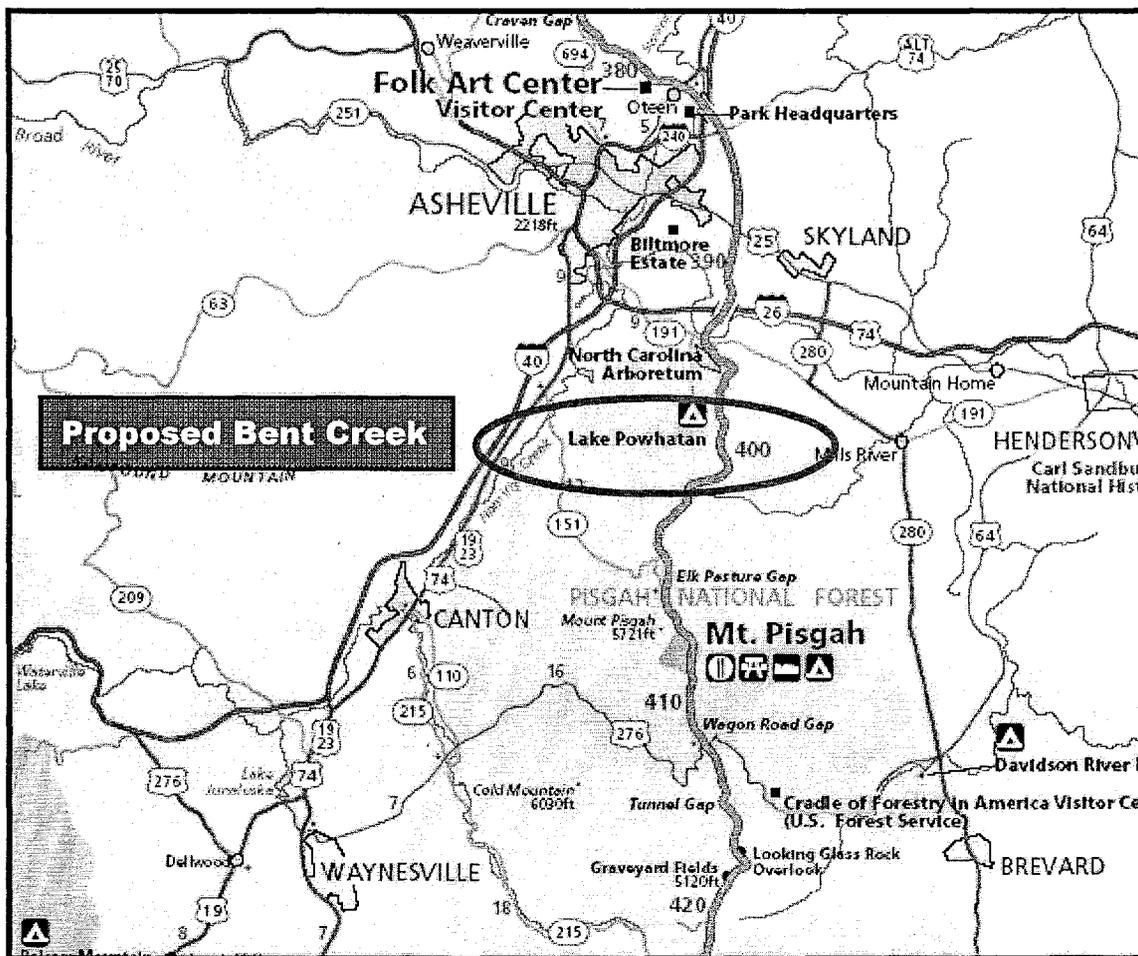


Figure 3 – Location of proposed Bent Creek picnic area: now Lake Powhatan

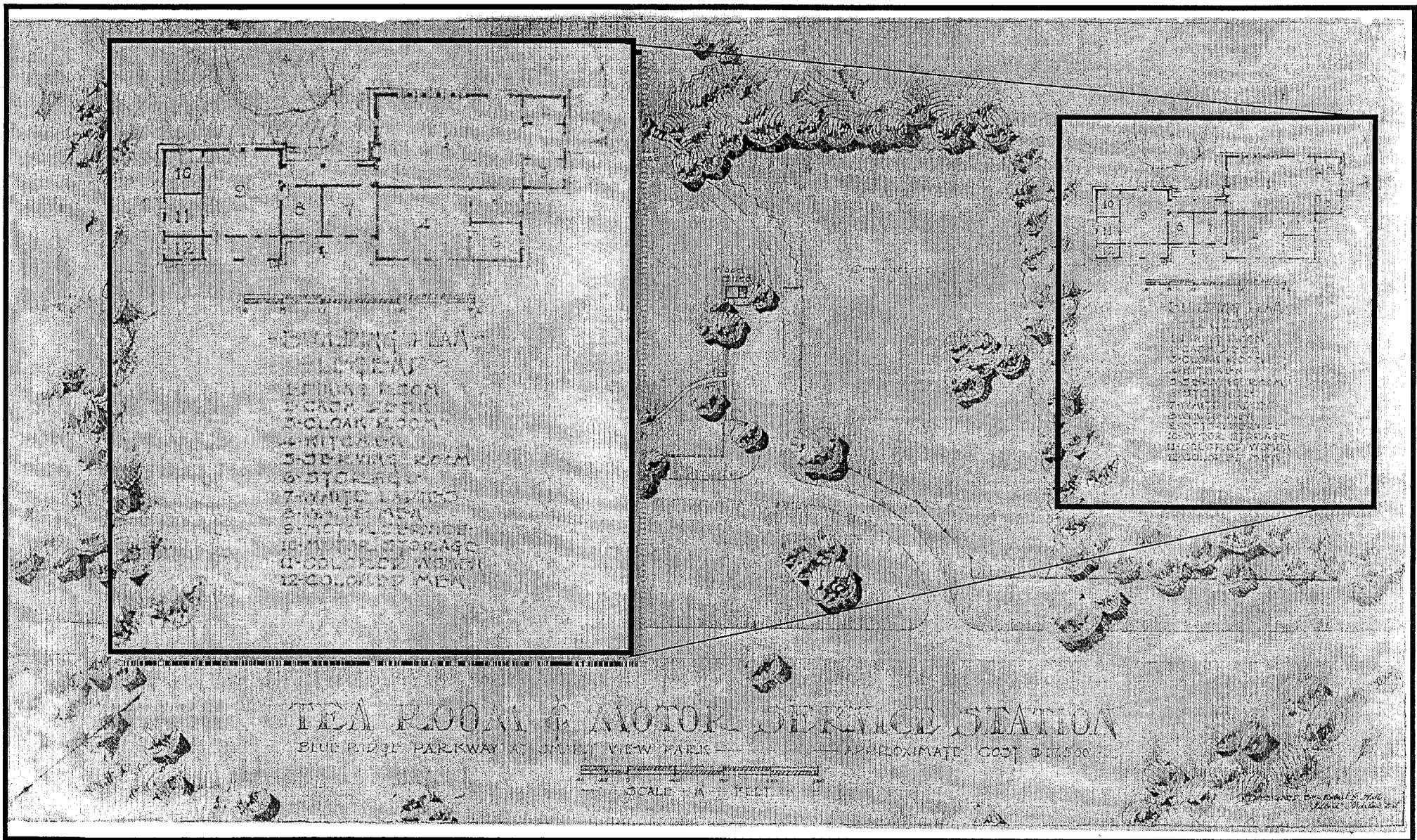


Figure 4 – 1936 Master Plan for Smart View Recreation Area Tea Room and Motor Service Station (BLRI Coll.)

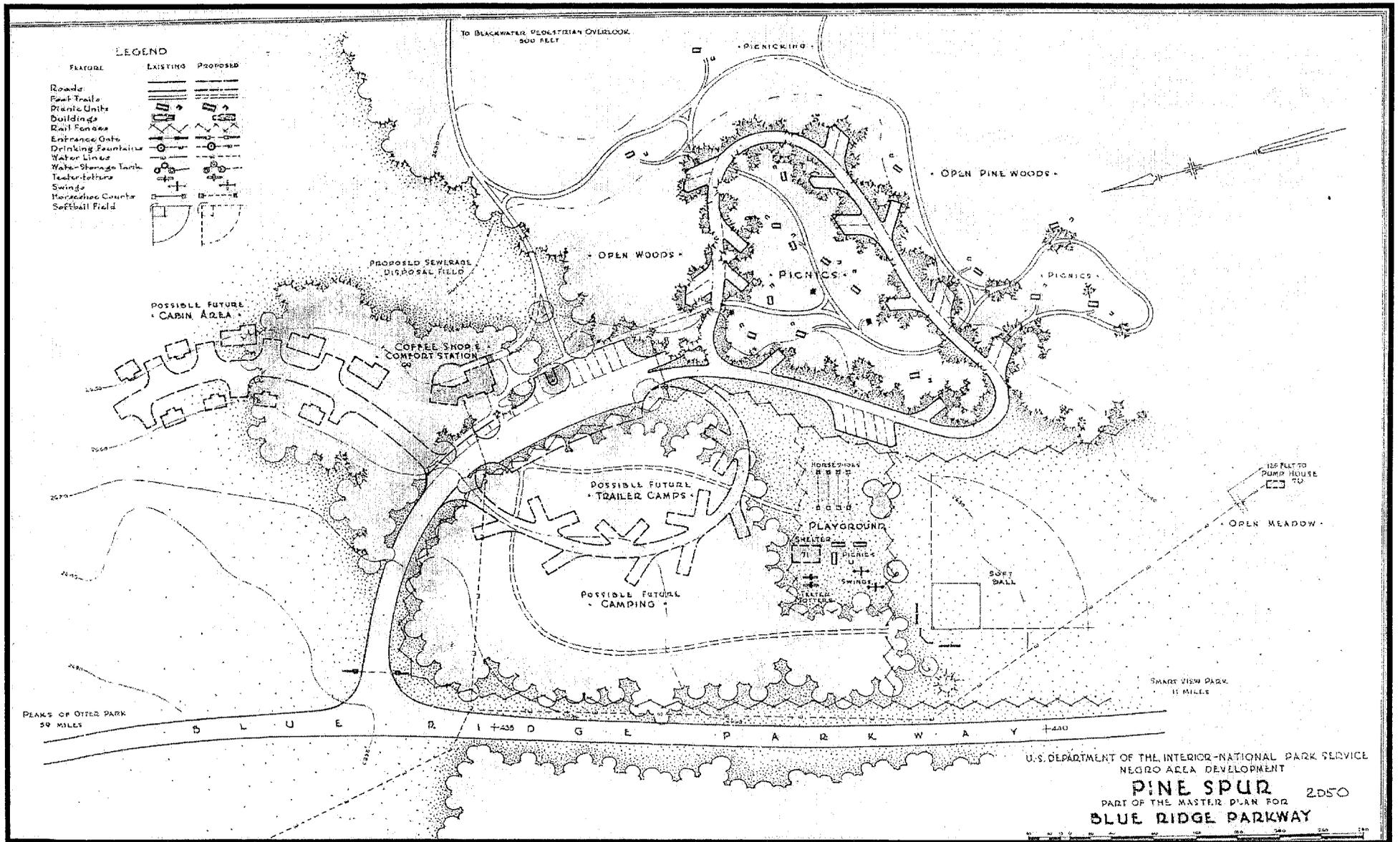


Figure 5 – 1941 Master Plan for Pine Spur Negro Recreation Area (BLRI Coll.)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR-NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 NEGRO AREA DEVELOPMENT
DINE SPUR RECREATIONAL AREA
 PART OF THE MASTER PLAN FOR
BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

DRAWN BY THE BRANCH OF PLANS & DESIGN
 FROM NATIONAL PARK SERVICE DATA AS OF JAN. 1, 1941
 DRAWN BY: HUBBARD CHECKED BY: RCH DRWG. NO. P.S. 1004

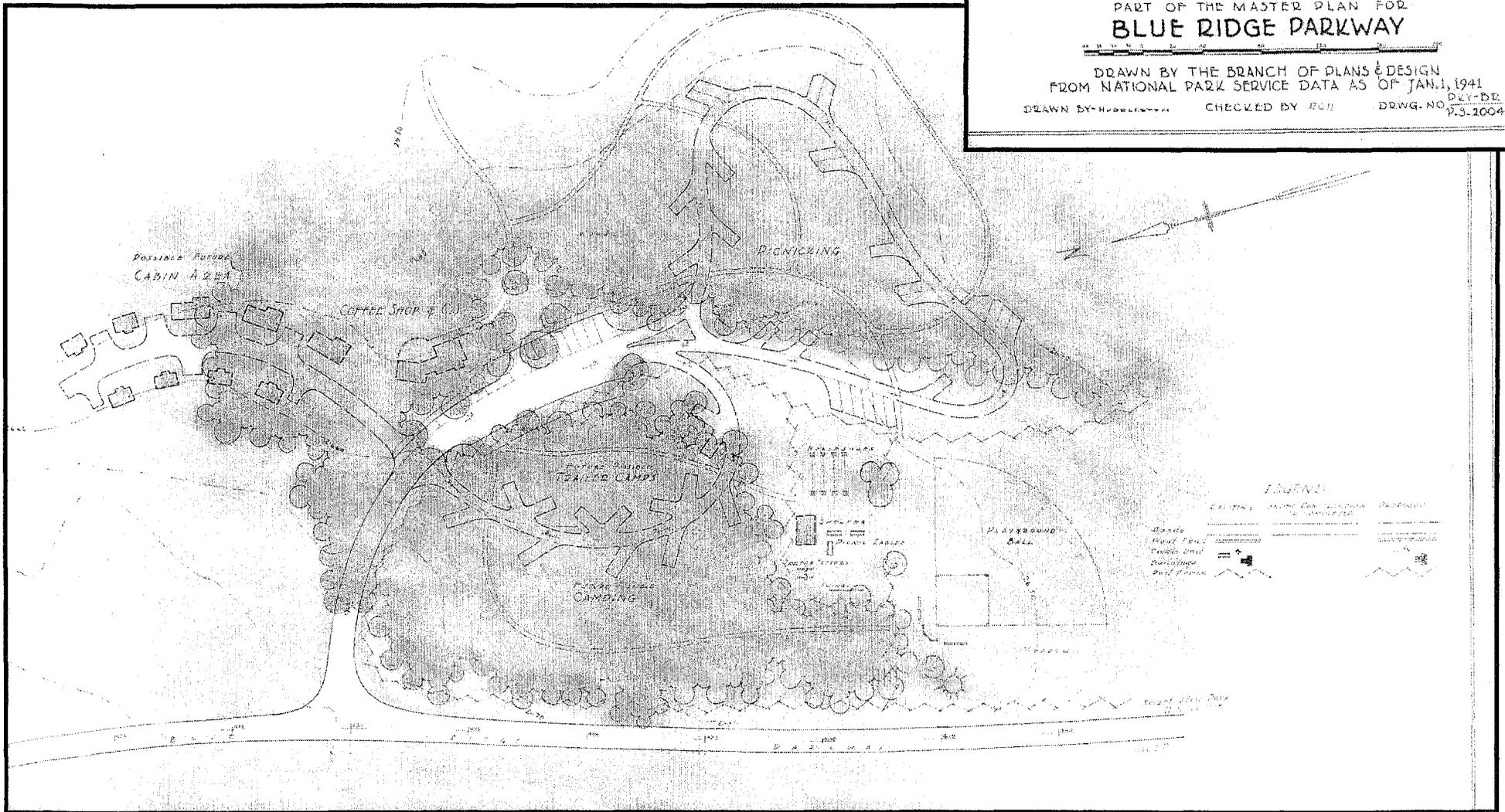


Figure 6 – 1943 Master Plan for the Negro Recreation Park Pine Spur (National Archives)

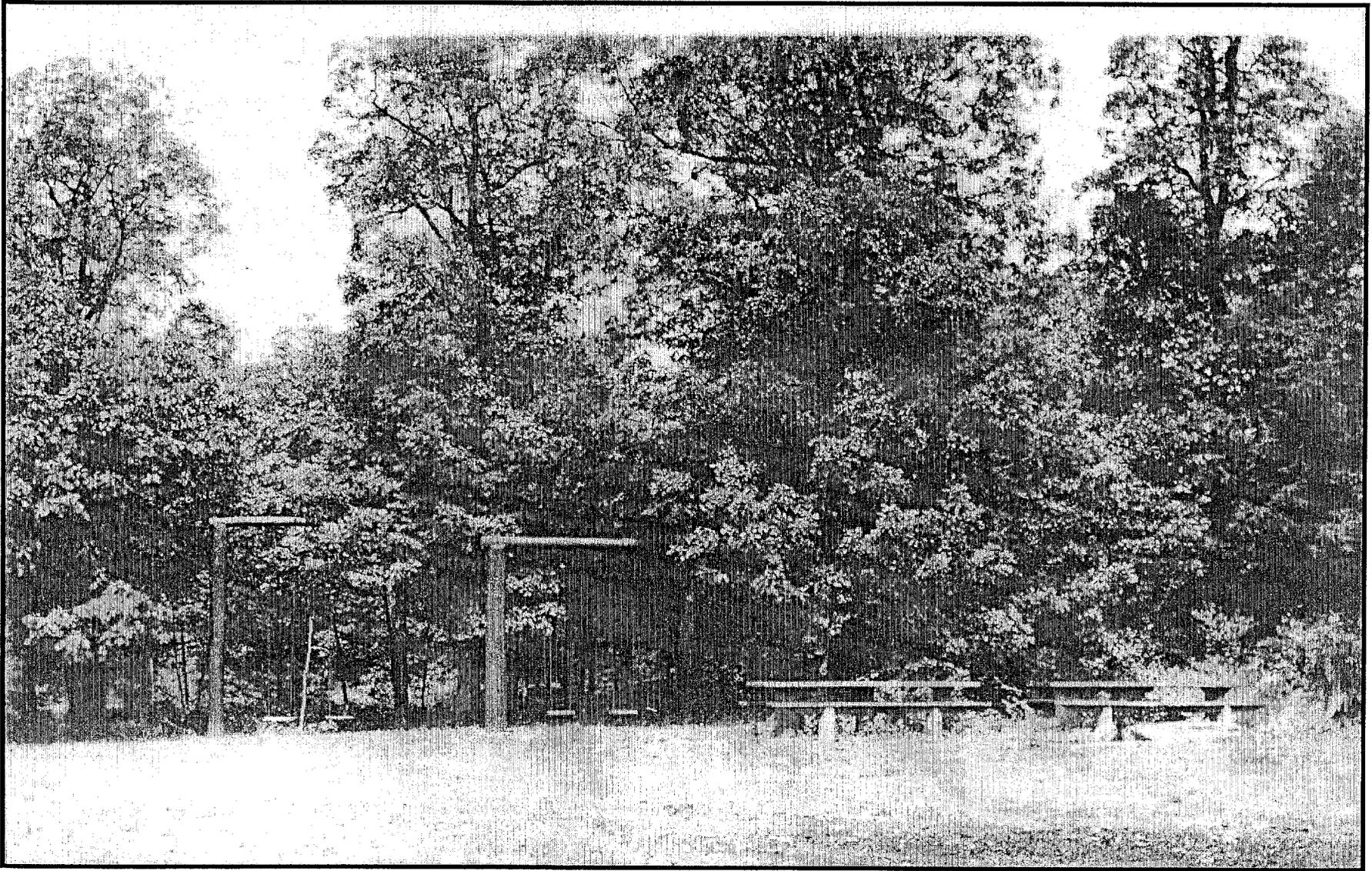


Figure 7 – Pine Spur swings and picnic tables 1941 (BLRI Coll.)

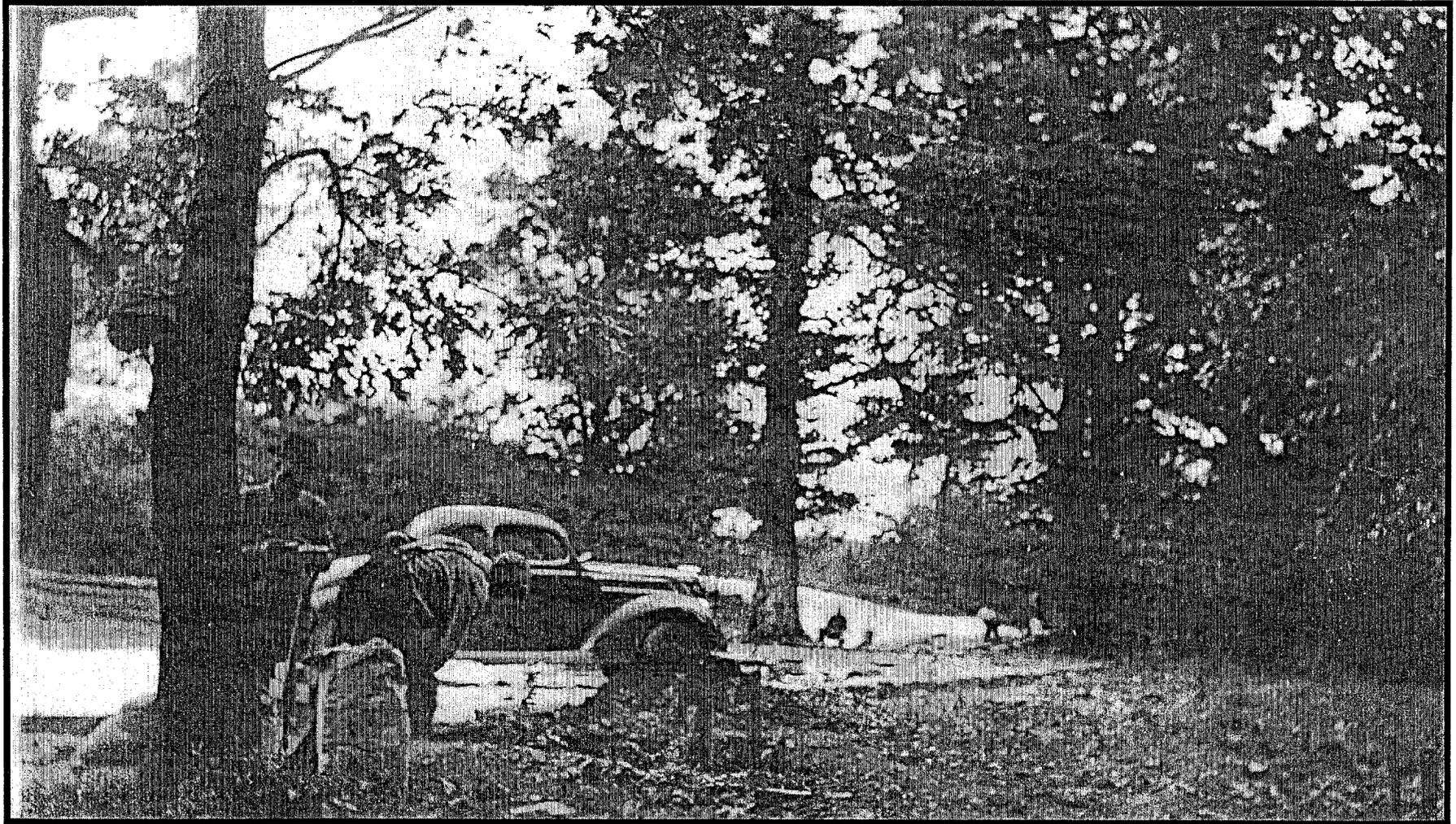


Figure 8 – Pine Spur Park stone curb at comfort station and concession building parking area – June 30, 1941 (BLRI Coll.)

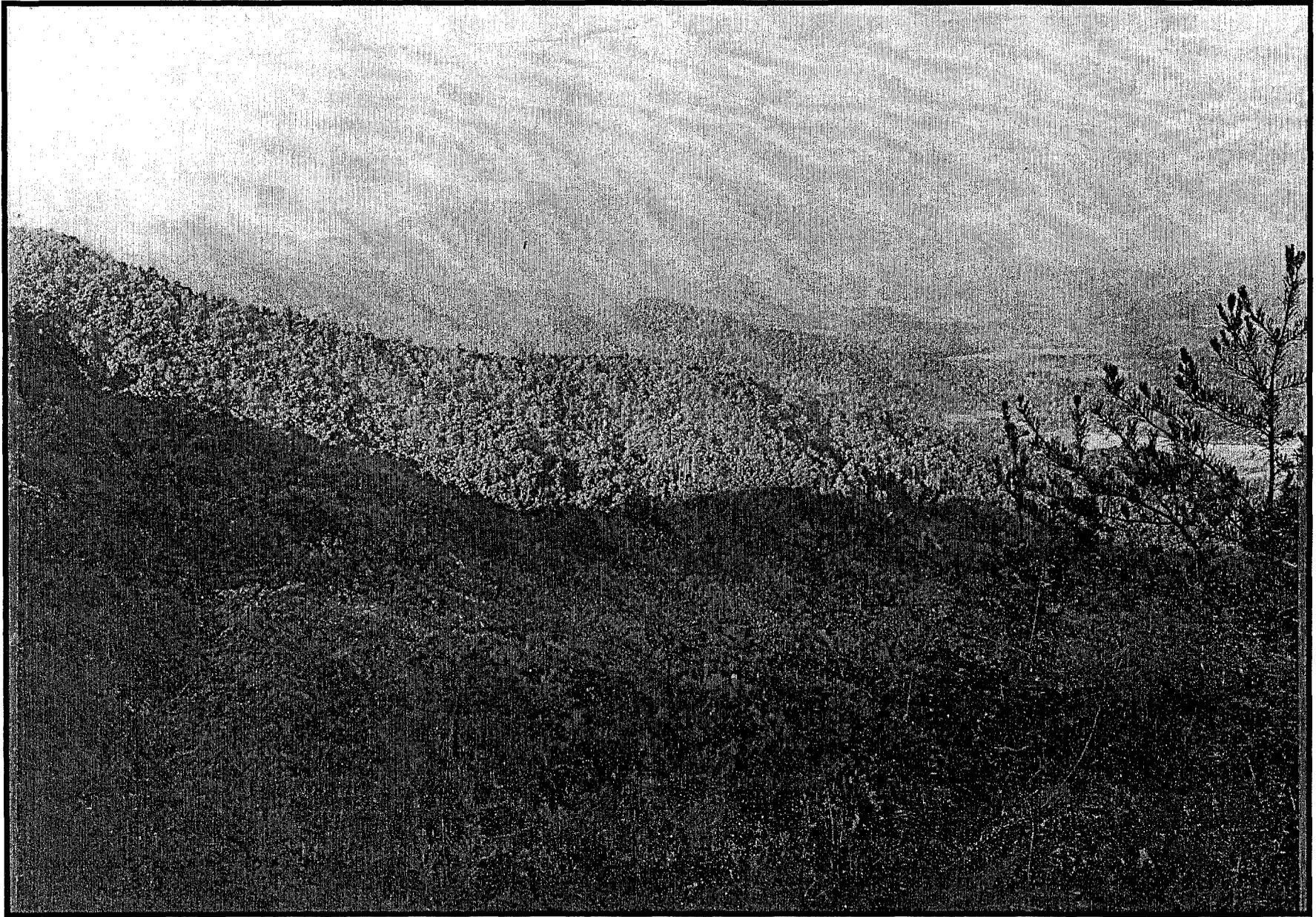


Figure 9 – Pine Spur Park North view – 1936 (BLRI Coll.)



Figure 11 – Doughton (Bluff) Park abandoned “woods” picnic area Number 1 behind Bluff Coffee Shop - 2009 (photo by Rebecca Jones)



Figure 12 – Doughton (Bluff) Park abandoned picnic area Number 1 behind Bluff Coffee Shop - 2009 (photo by Rebecca Jones).

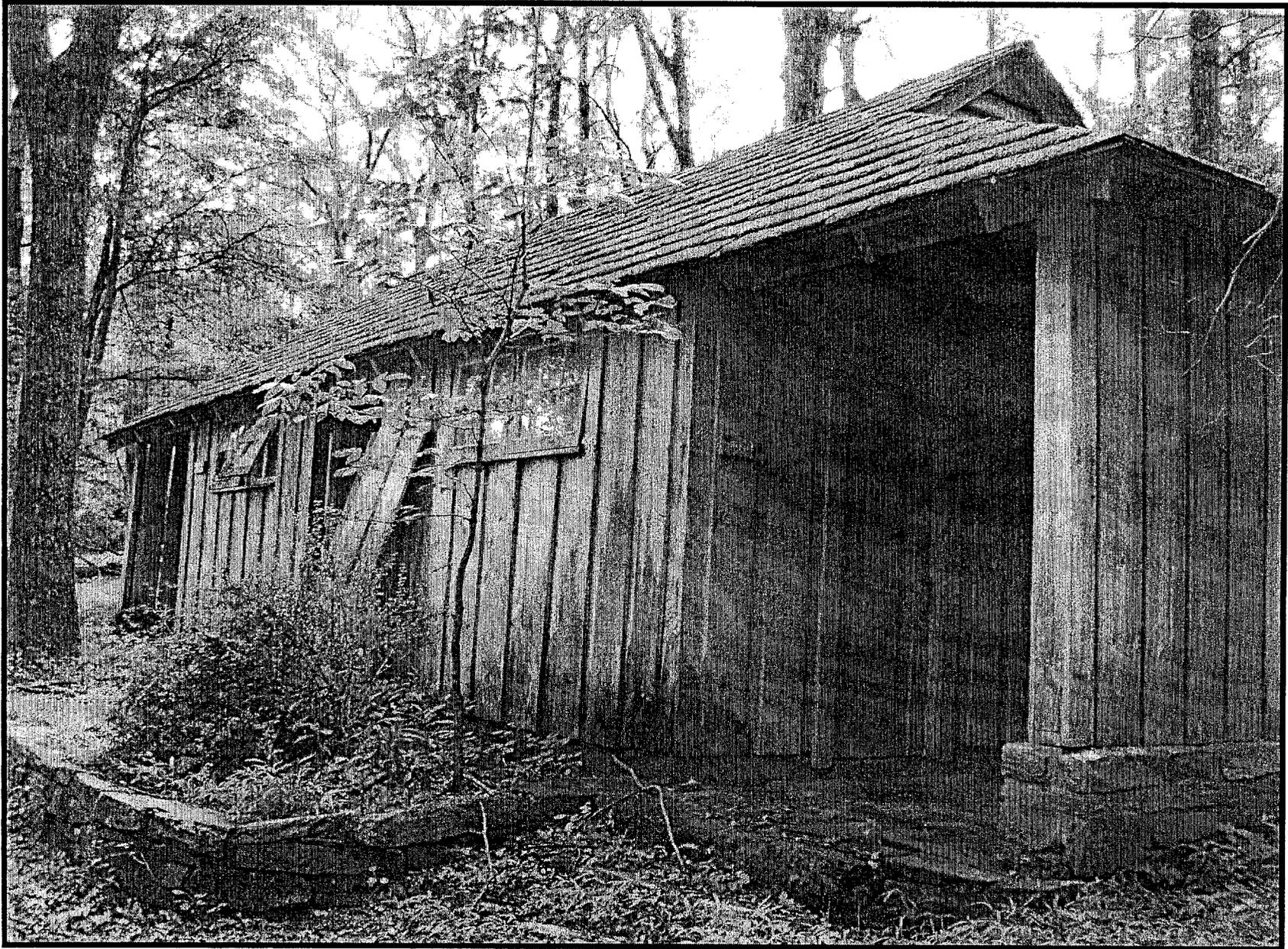


Figure 13 – Abandoned bathroom #101 at Doughton (Bluff) Park picnic area behind Bluff Coffee Shop - 2009 (photos by Rebecca Jones)

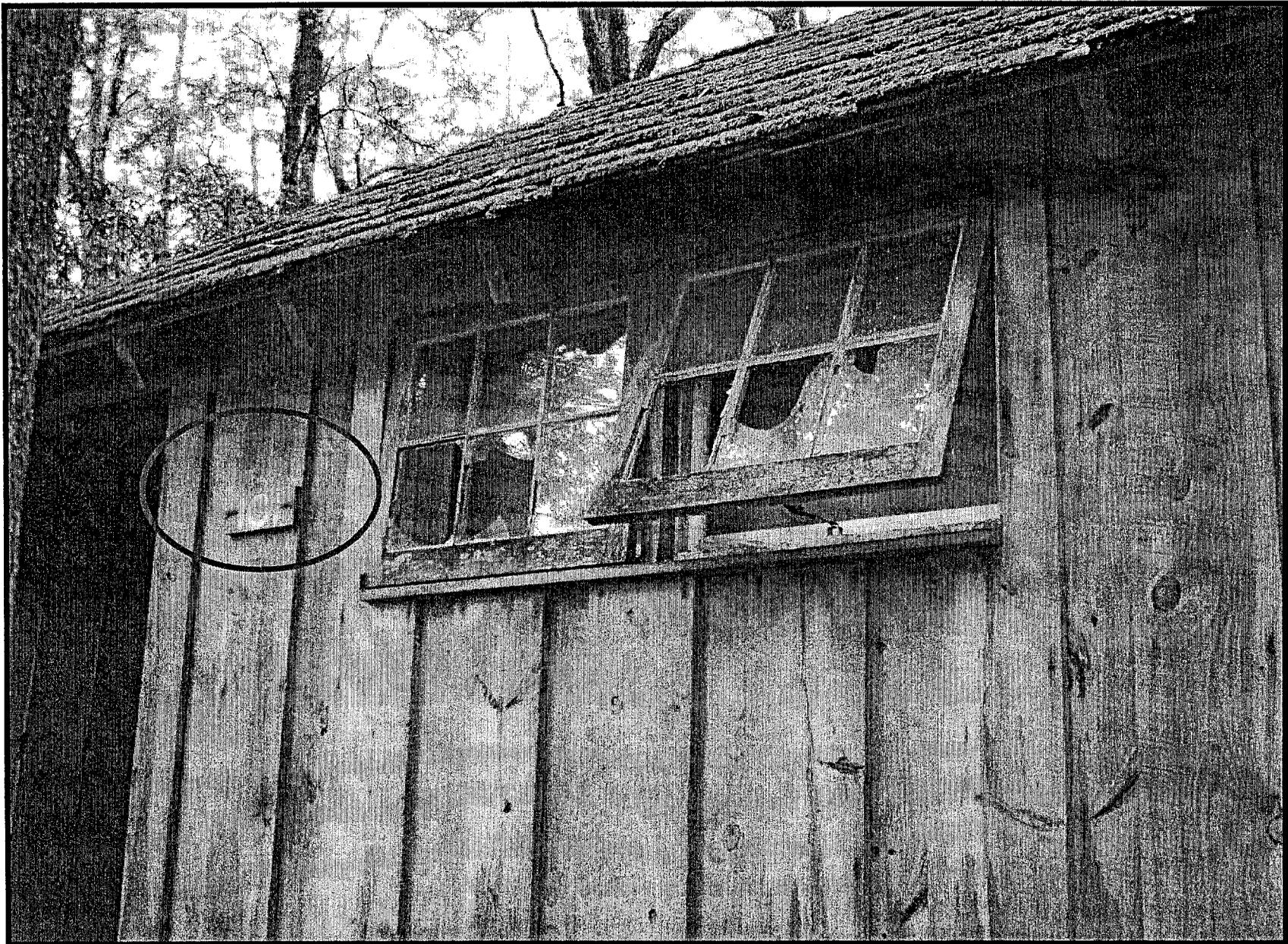


Figure 14 – Abandoned bathroom #101 at Doughton (Bluff) Park picnic area behind Bluff Coffee Shop - 2009 (photos by Rebecca Jones)

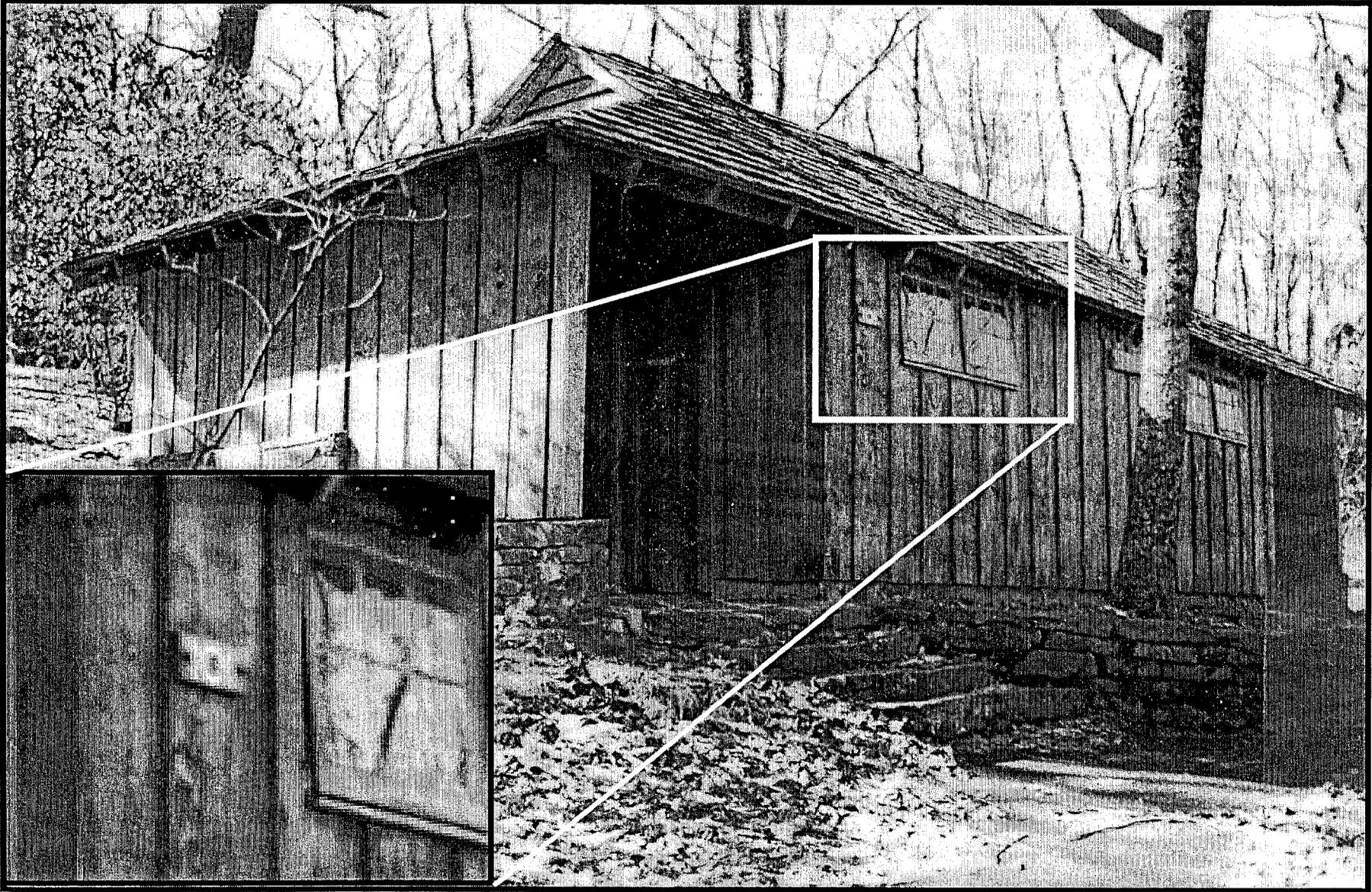


Figure 15 - Comfort Station #101 at Doughton (Bluff) Park built in 1942 – photo taken 1976 (BLRI Coll.)



Figure 16 - Comfort Station # 101 at Doughton (Bluff) Park – 1976 (BLRI Coll.)



Figure 17 - Comfort Station #101 at Douhgton (Bluff) Park – 1976 (BLRI Coll.)

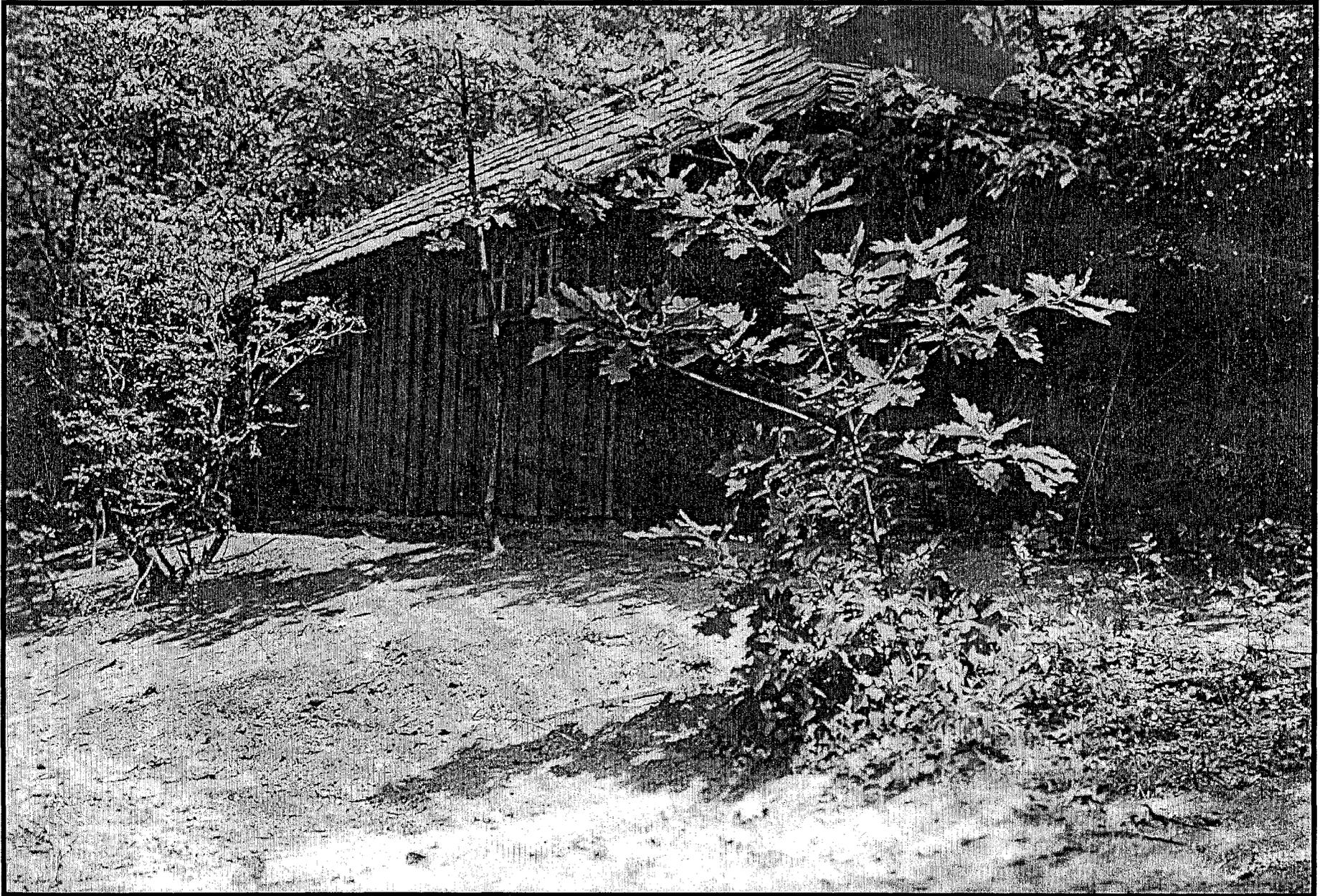


Figure 18 - Comfort station at picnic area #1 at Doughton (Bluff) Park – 1942 (BLRI Coll.)



Figure 19 - Entrance to “woods” picnic area #1 at Doughton (Bluff) Park – 1940 (BLRI Coll.)



Figure 20 – Comfort Stations at the “meadows” picnic area #3 – Doughton (Bluff) Park – 1941 (BLRI Coll.)

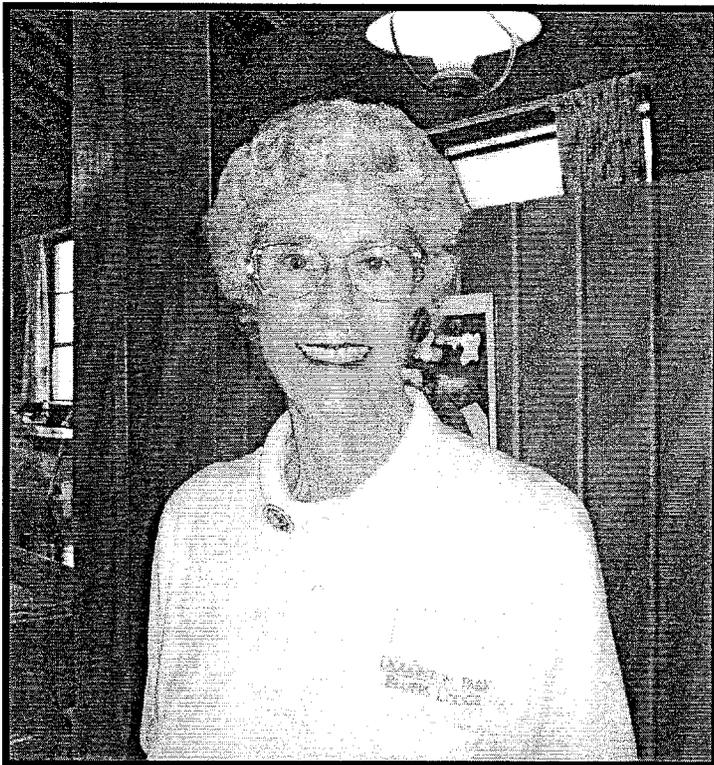


Figure 21 – Ellen Smith at Bluffs Coffee Shop – 2009 (photo by Rebecca Jones)



Figure 22 - Bluffs Coffee Shop – 1953 (BLRI Coll.)

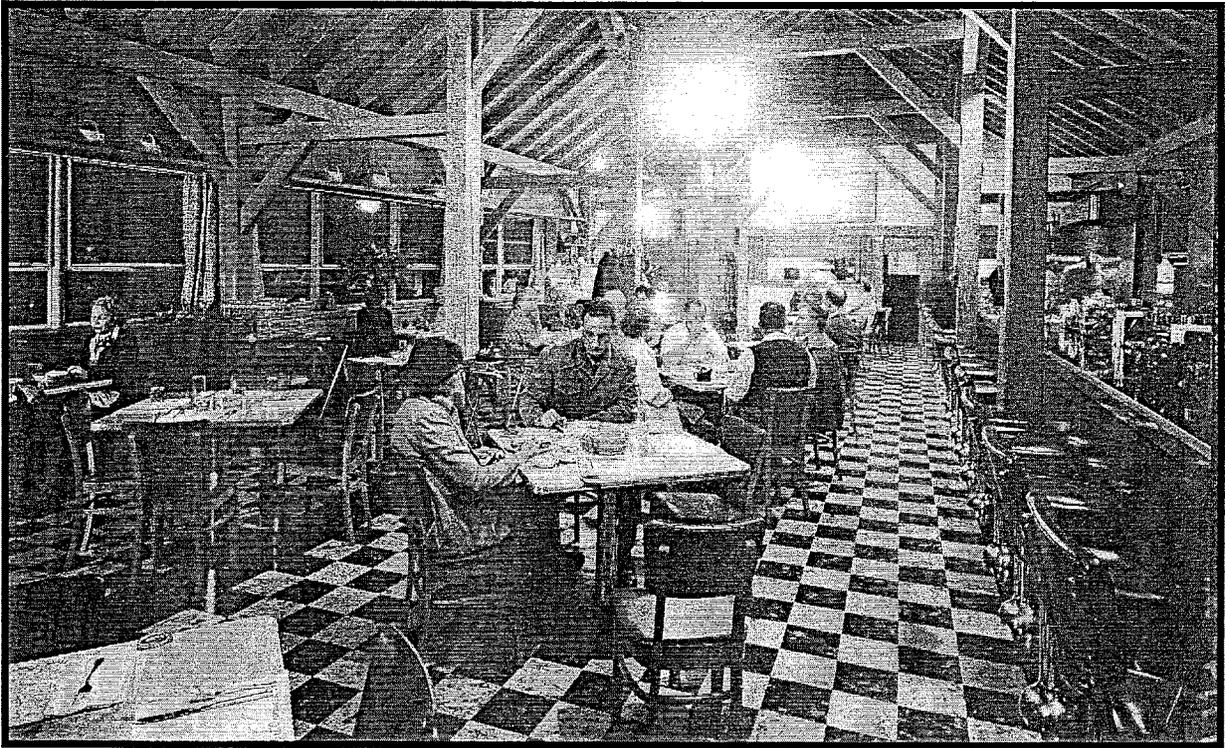


Figure 23- Bluffs Coffee Shop – 1953 (BLRI Coll.)

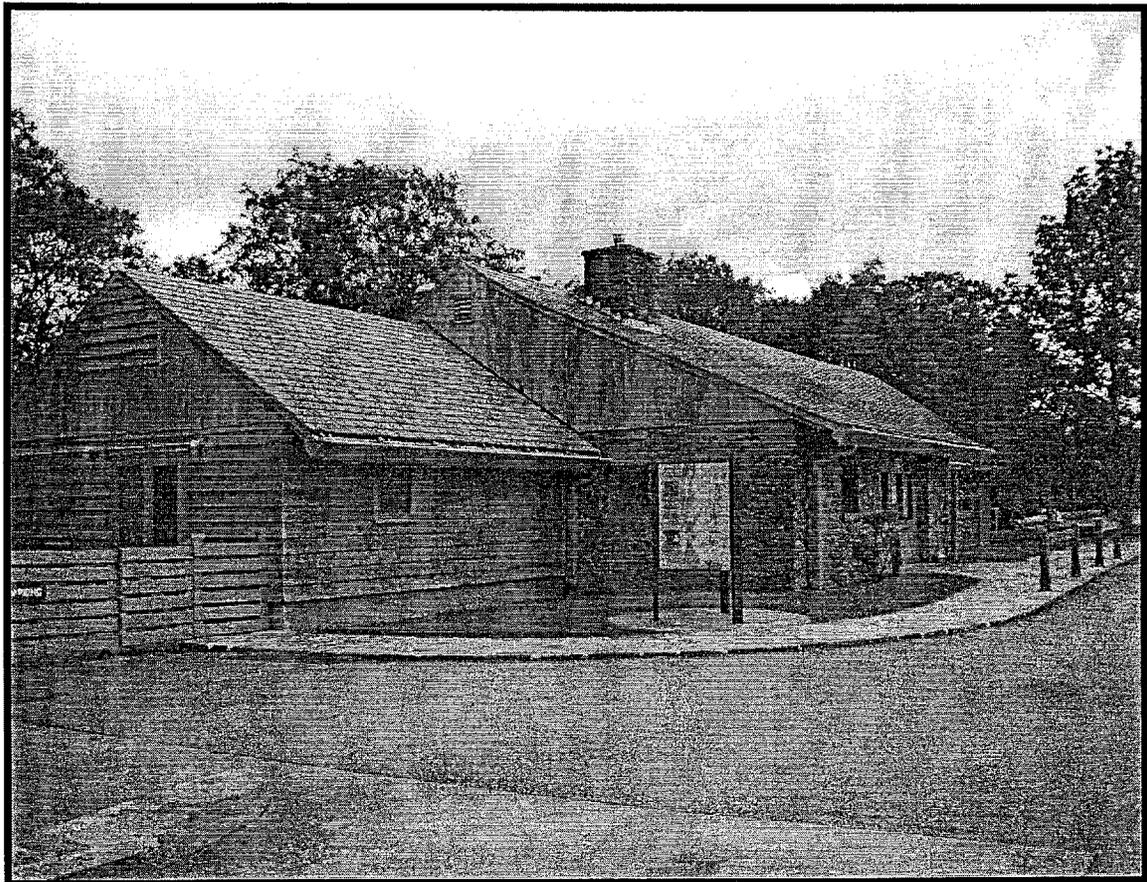


Figure 24 – Bluffs Coffee Shop – 2009 (photo by Rebecca Jones)

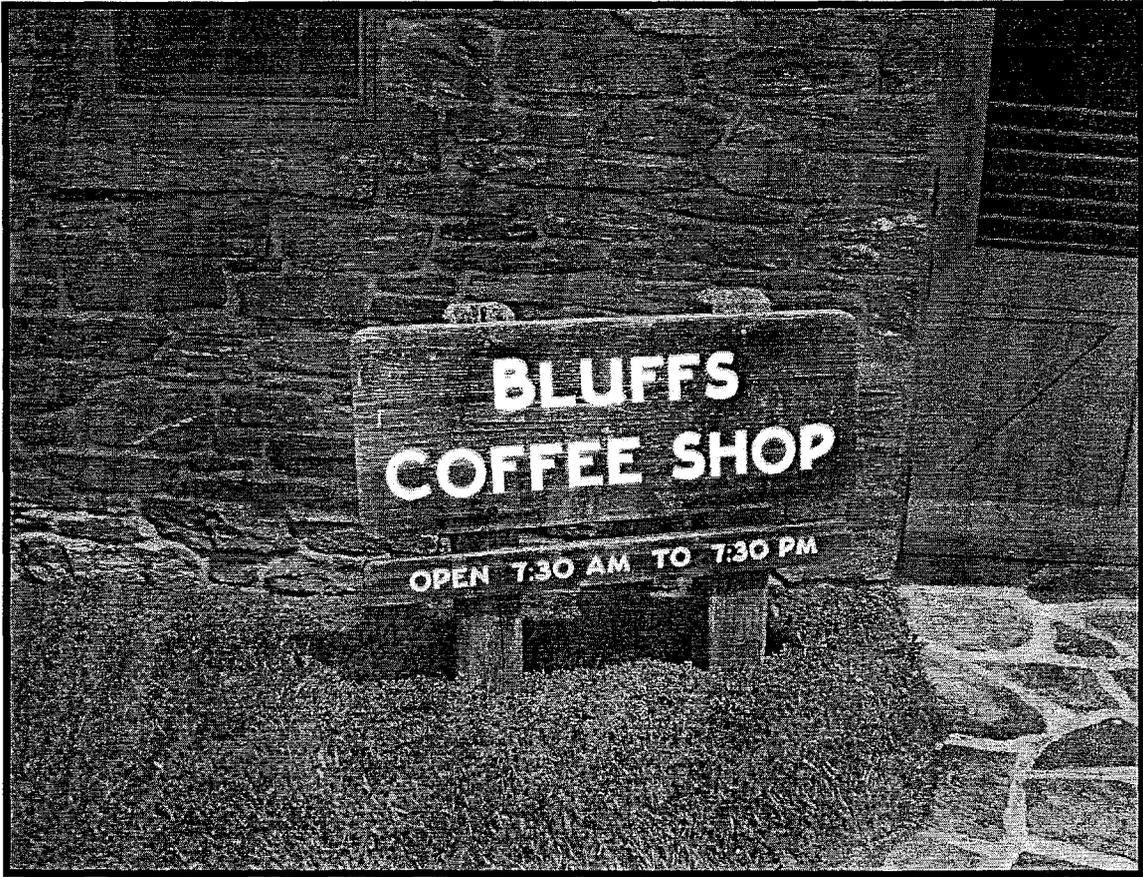


Figure 25 - Bluffs Coffee Shop – 2009 (photo by Rebecca Jones)

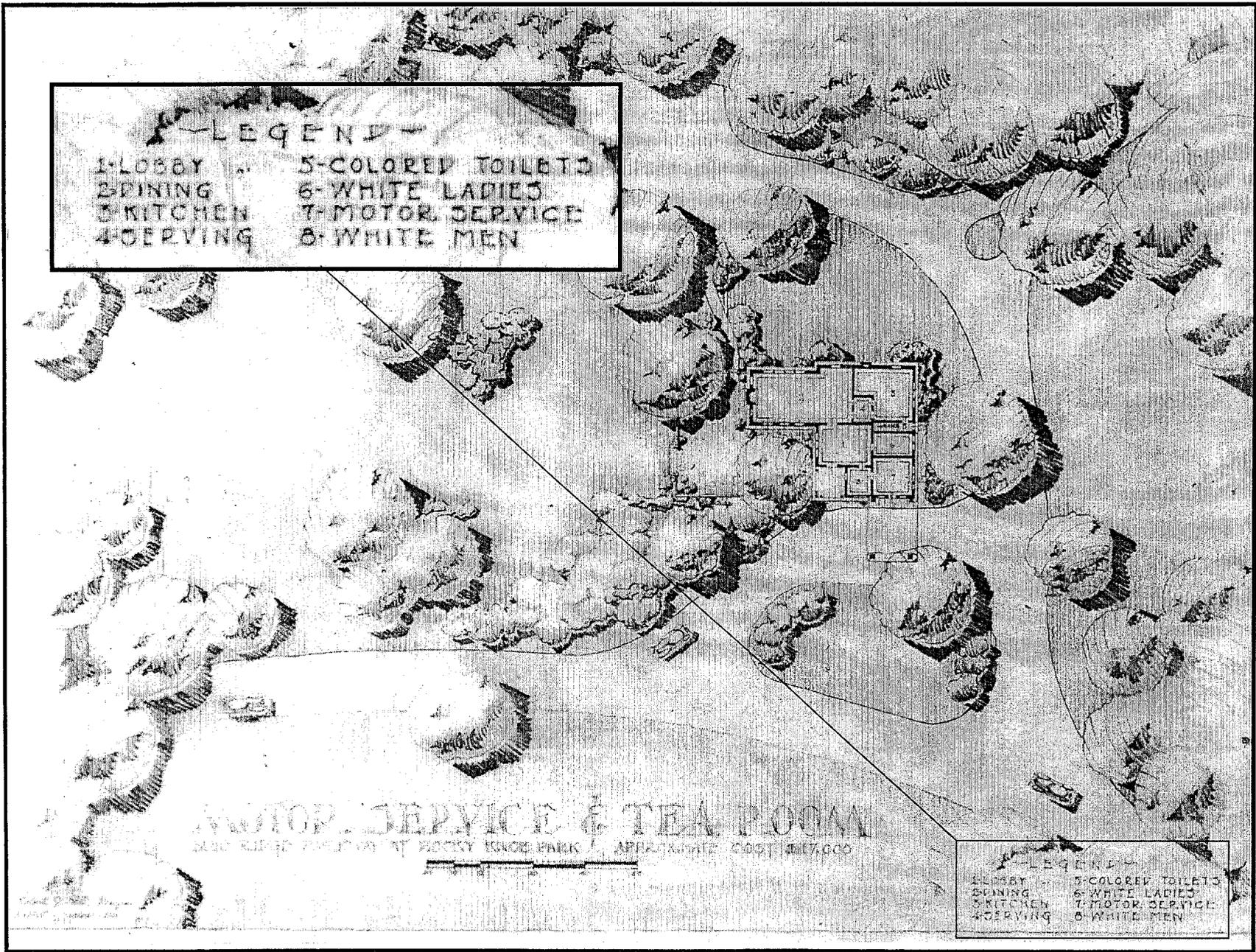


Figure 26 – 1936 Master Plan Rocky Knob – Segregated Bathrooms (BLRI Coll.)

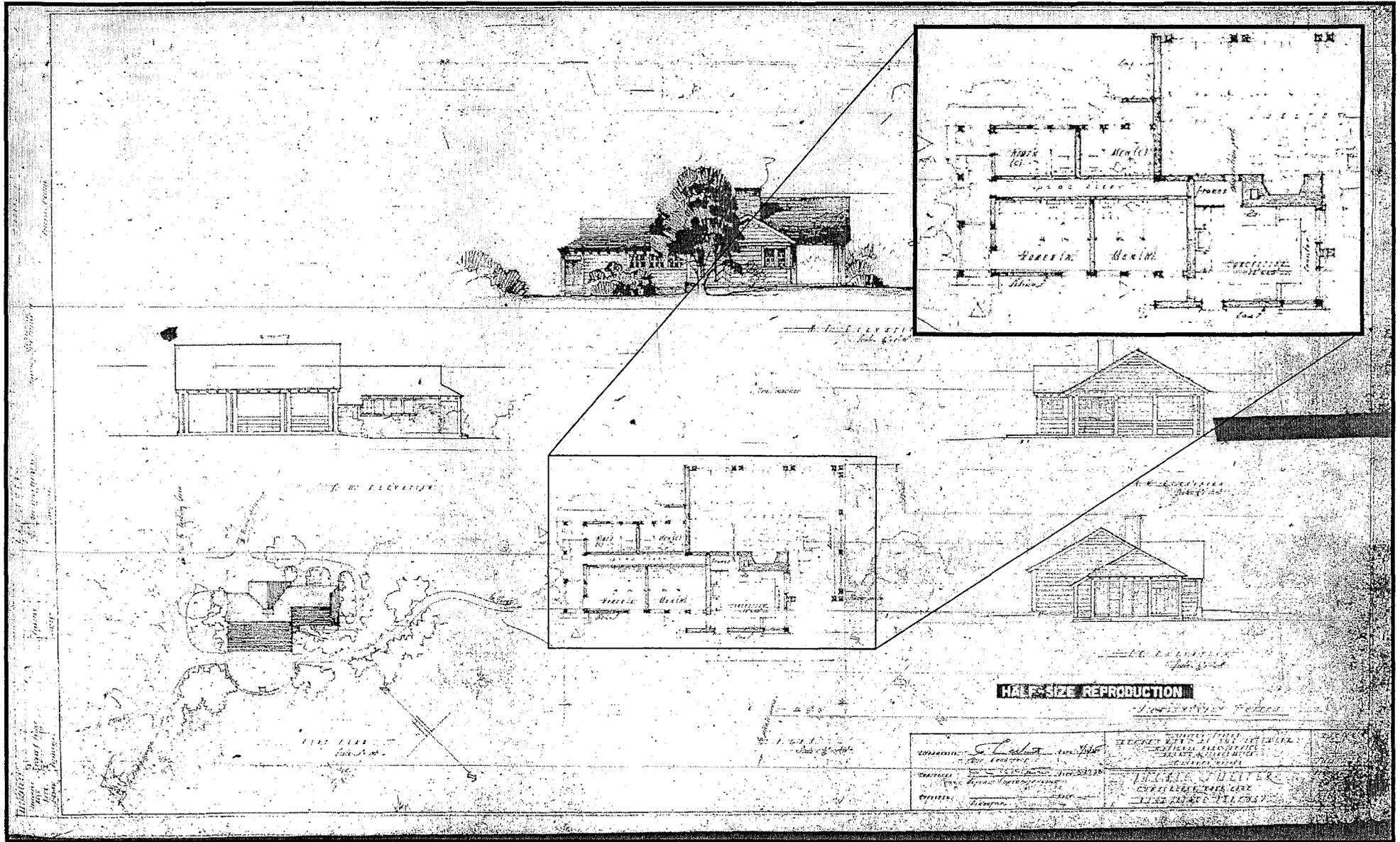


Figure 27 – 1938 Master Plan for Cumberland Knob – segregated bathrooms indicated with a “(C)” (BLRI Coll.)

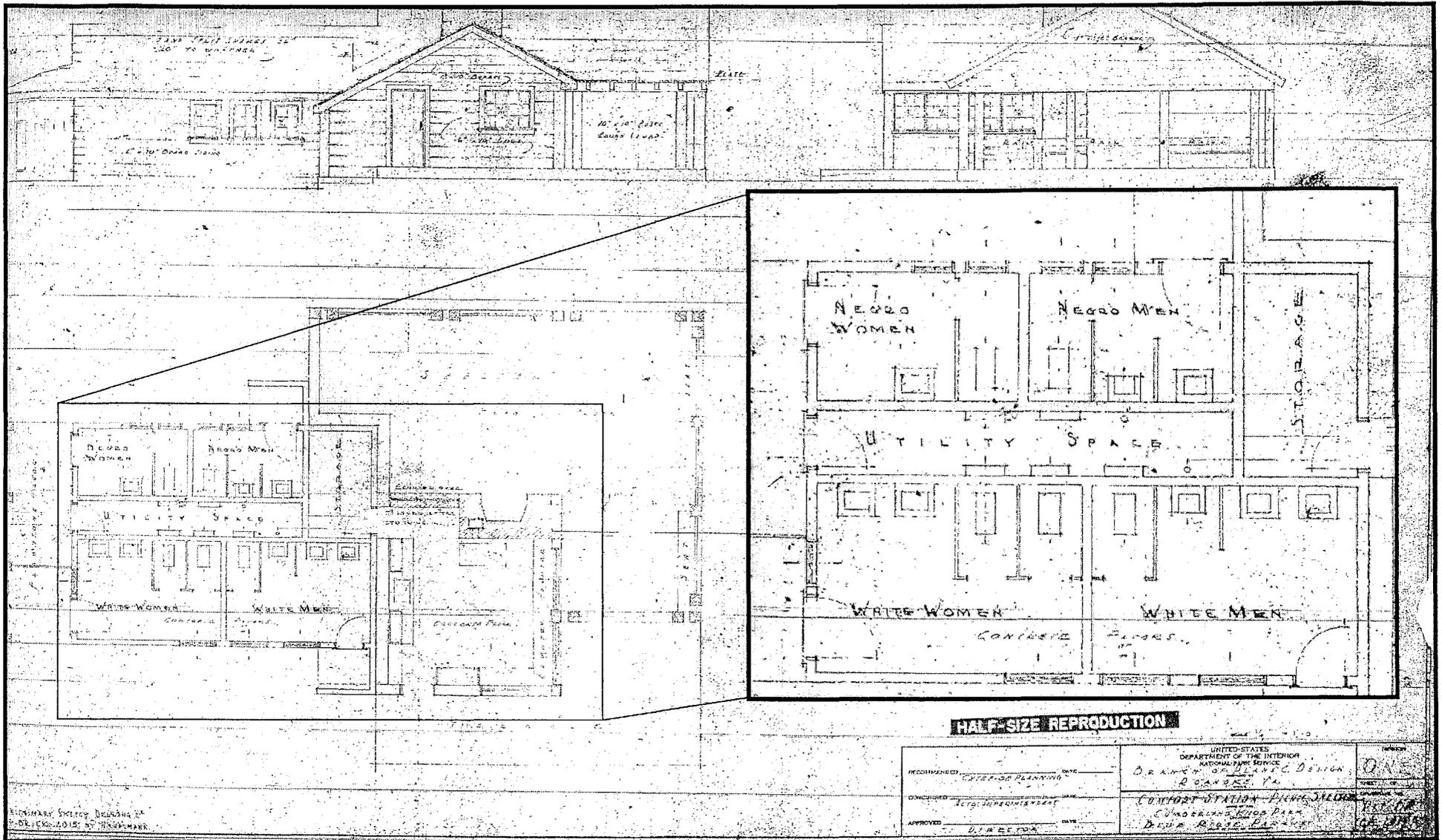


Figure 28 – 1939 plan for Cumberland Knob – segregated bathrooms (BLRI Coll.)

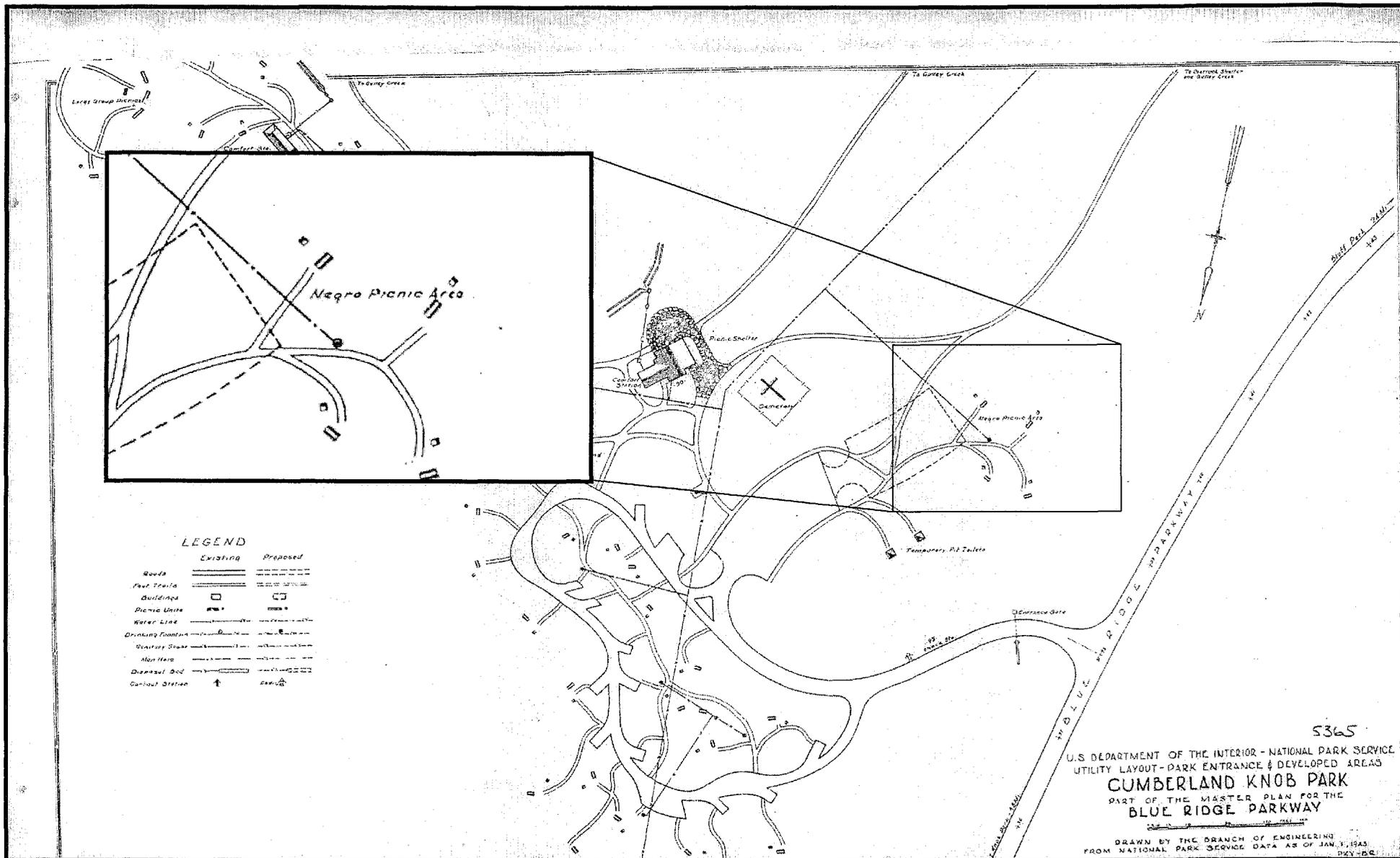


Figure 30 – 1943 Master Plan for Cumberland Knob – segregated picnic area (BLRI Coll.)

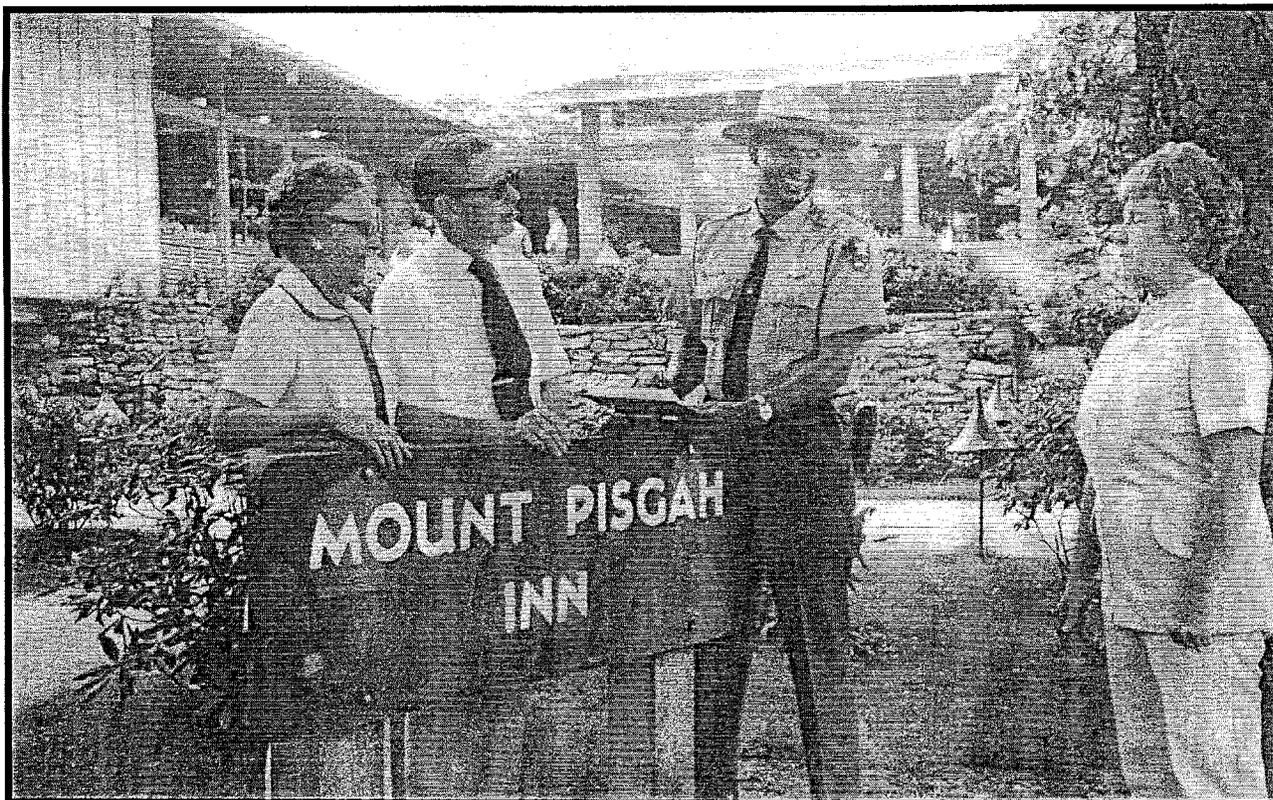


Figure 31 – African American park ranger, Willie McDaniel – 1973 (BLRI Coll.)

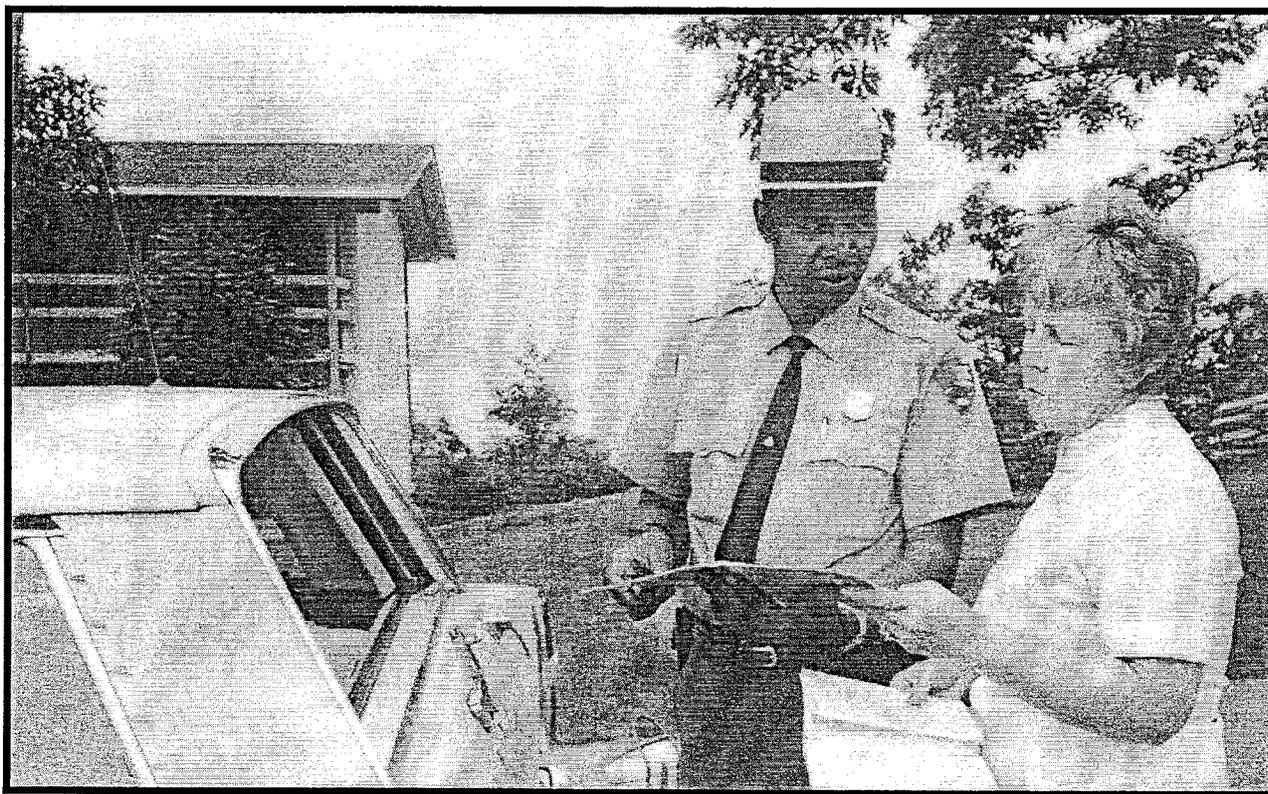


Figure 32 – African American park ranger, Willie McDaniel – 1973 (BLRI Coll.)

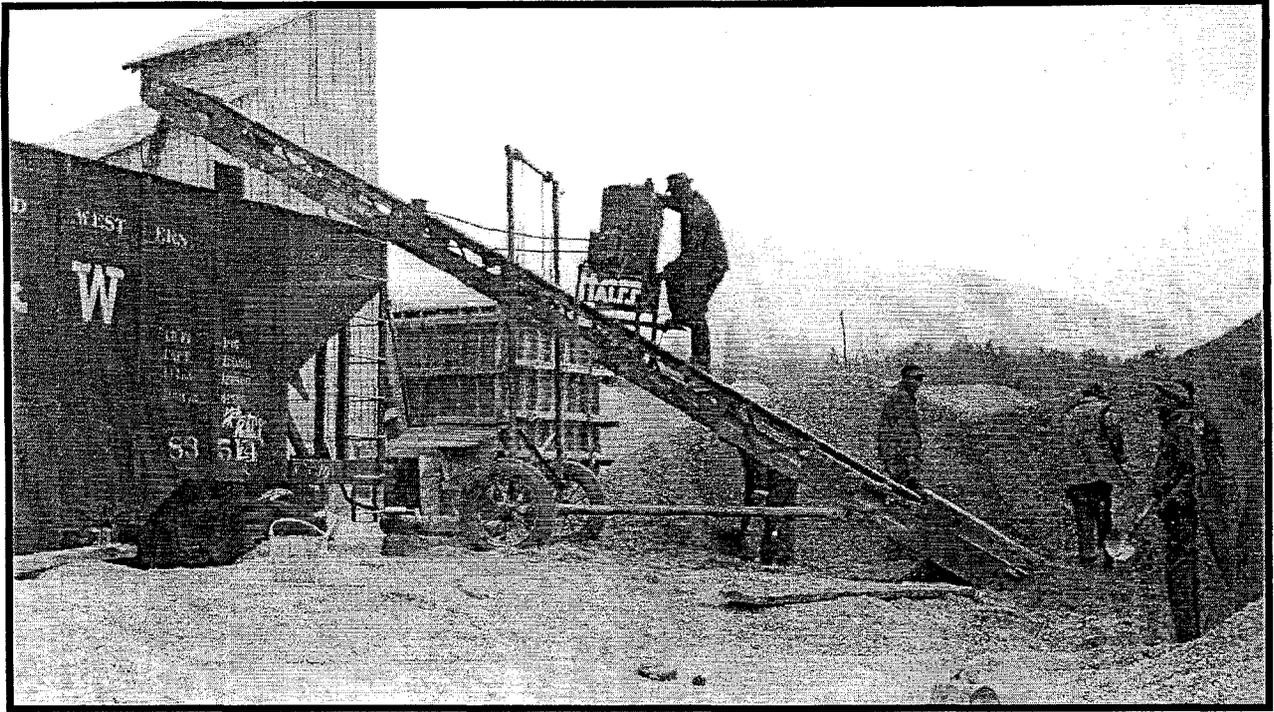


Figure 33 – Possible African Americans working at Blue Ridge Quarry in Roanoke, Virginia in 1937 (BLRI Coll.)

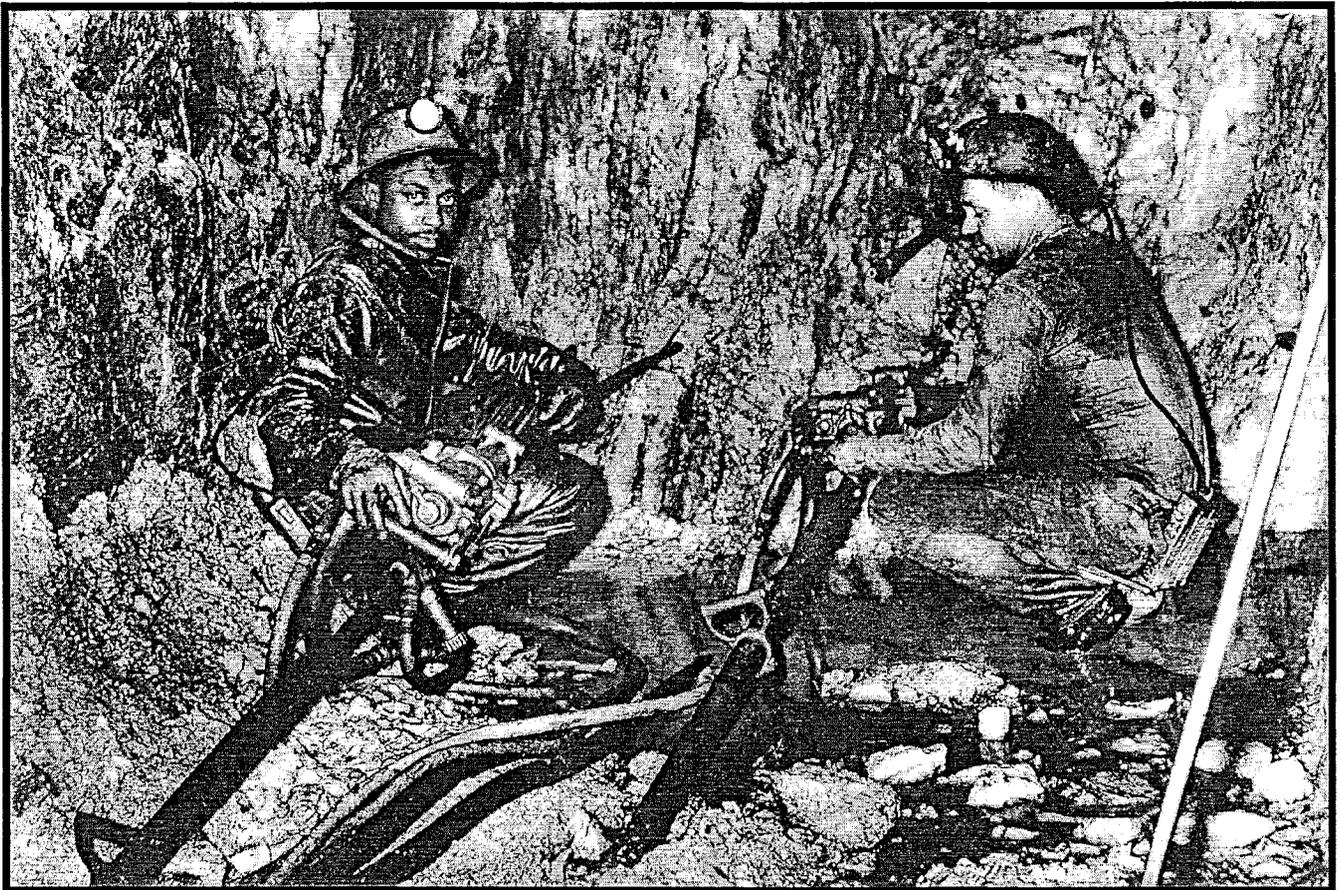


Figure 34 - African Americans working in an unknown mine shaft in 1955 (BLRI Coll.)

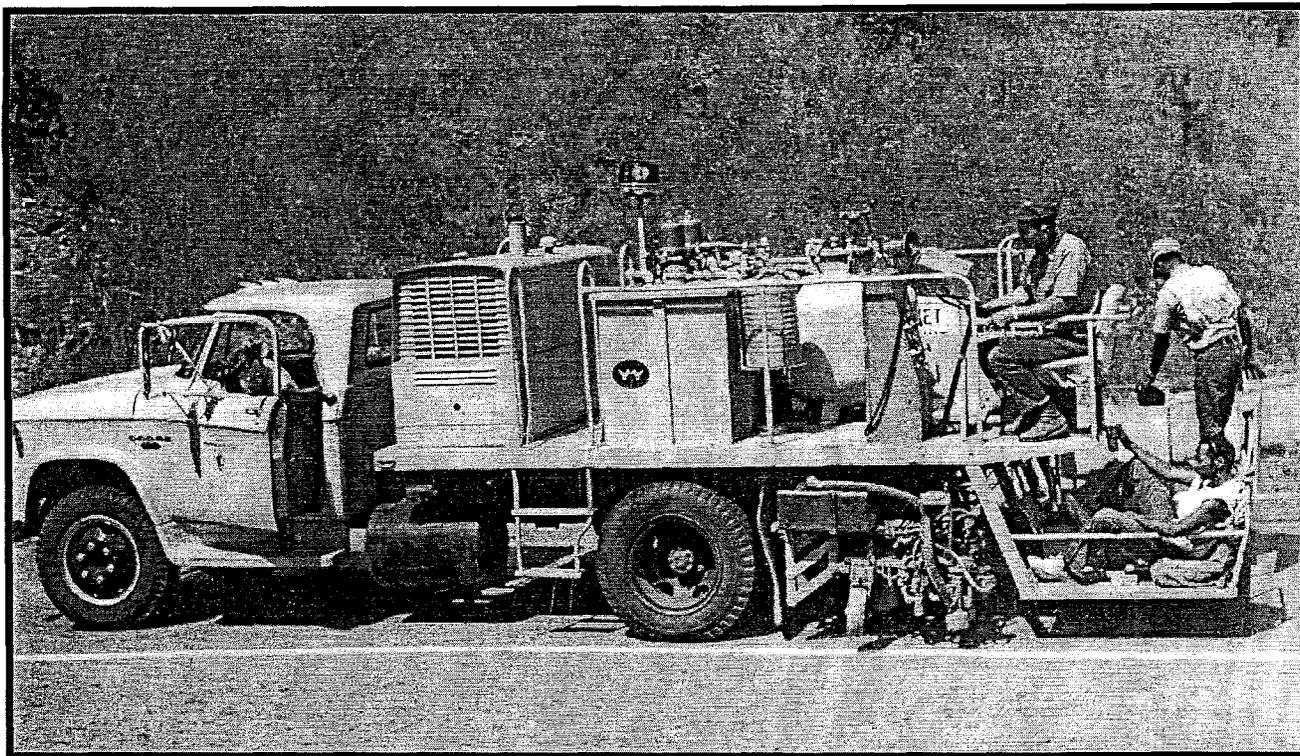


Figure 35 - African Americans working on road stripping near Asheville in 1973 (BLRI Coll.)

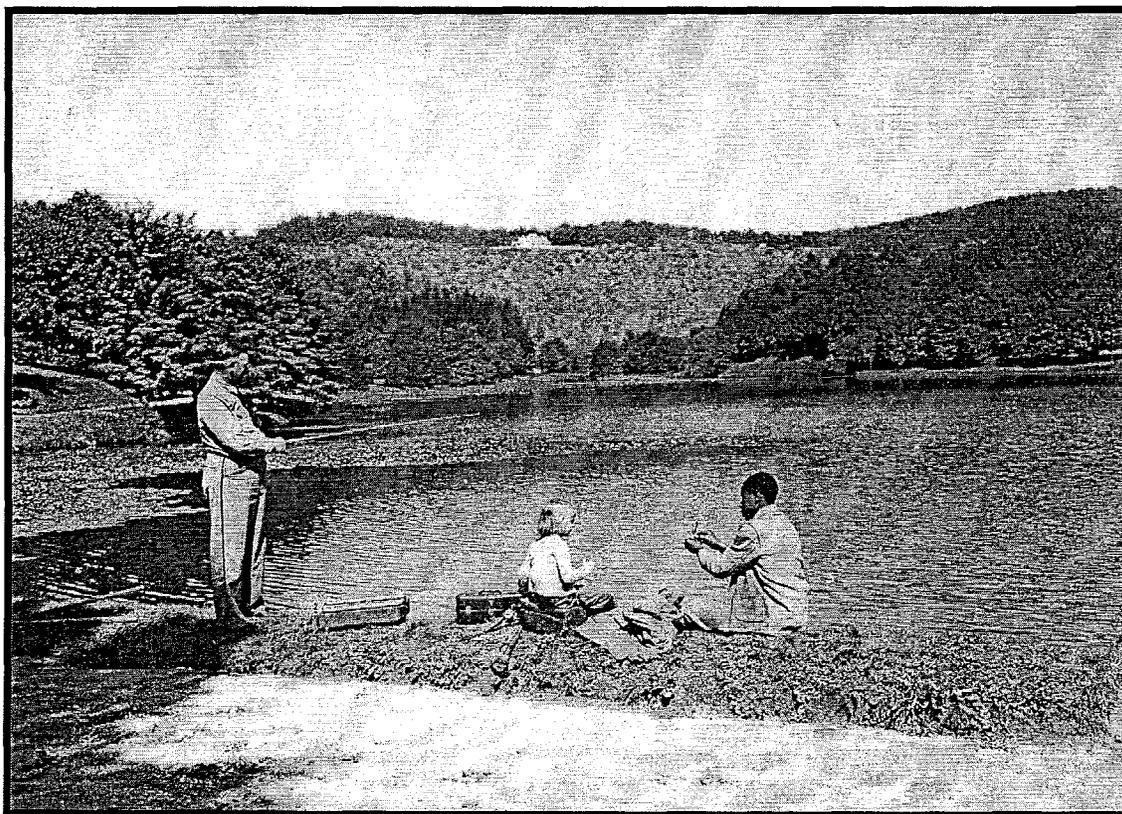


Figure 36 - Young African American baiting a fishing hook at Price Lake – date unknown (BLRI Coll.)

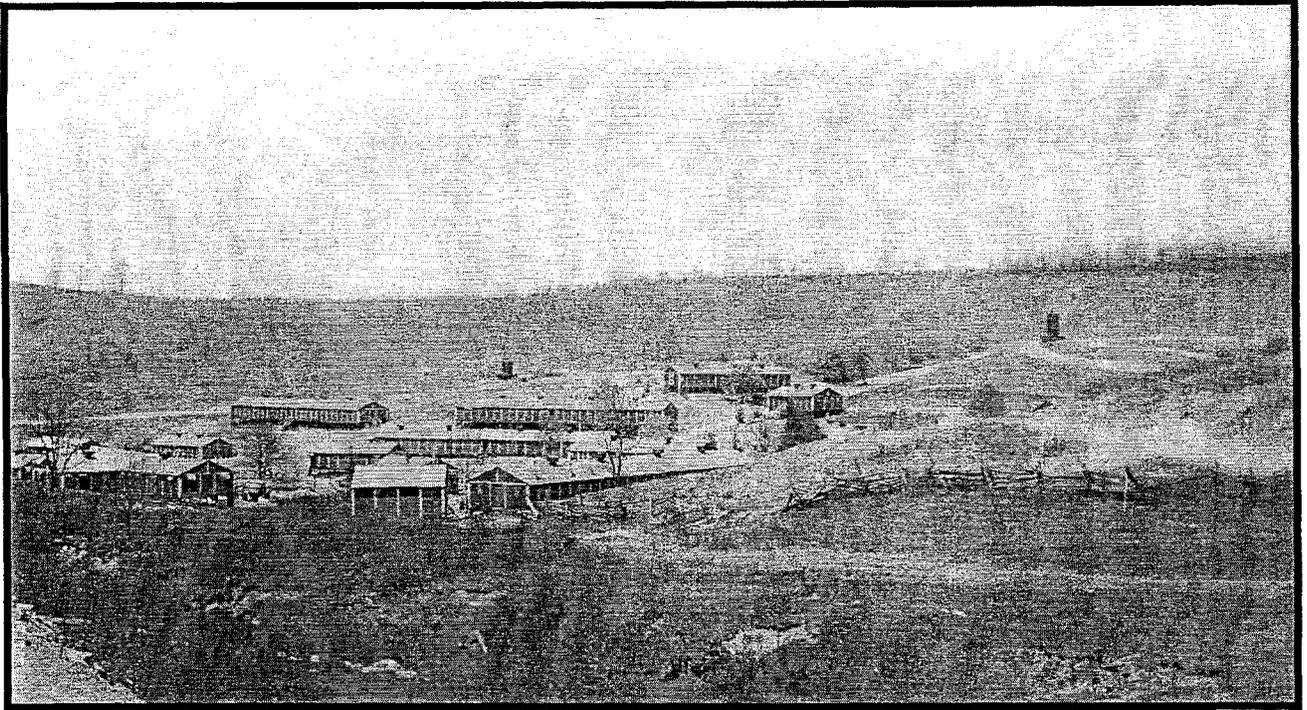


Figure 37 – CCC Camp NP-21 Laurel Springs, North Carolina – date unknown (BLRI Coll.)

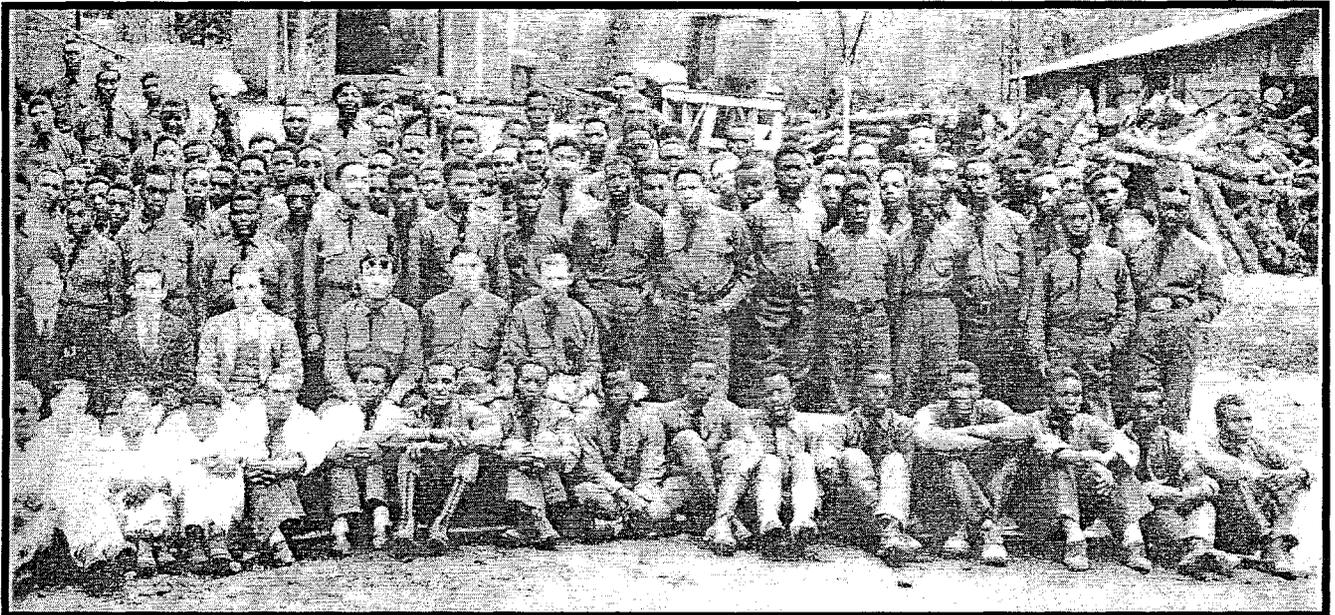
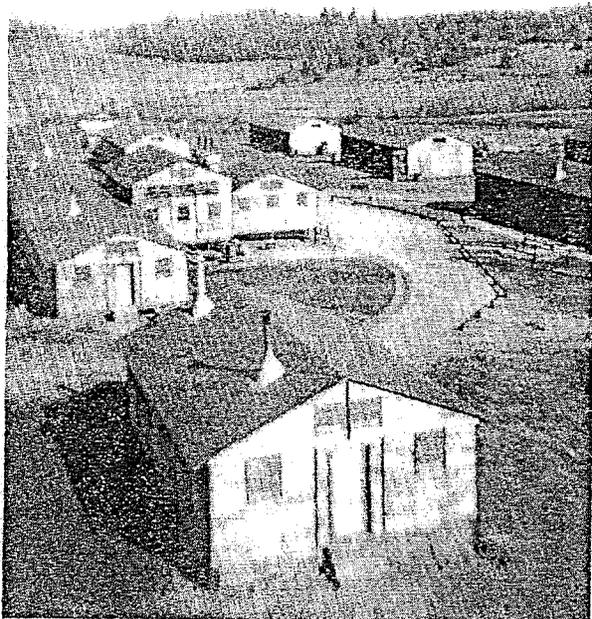
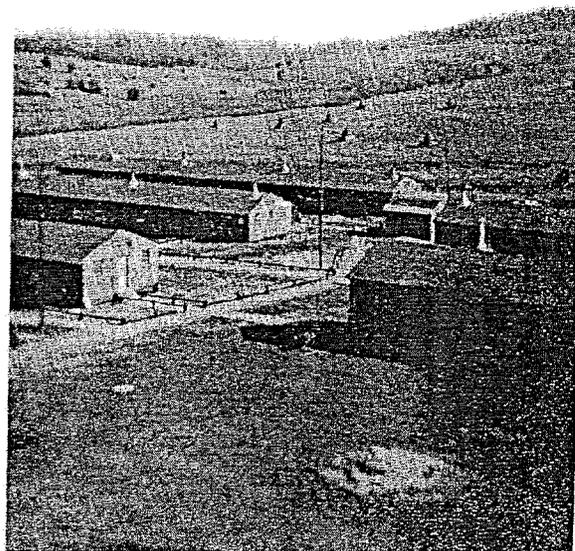


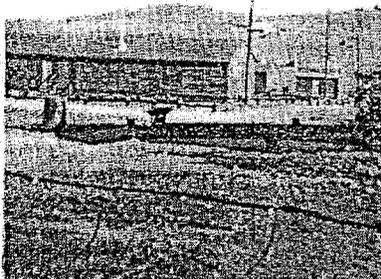
Figure 38 – African Americans with white camp officers at Camp Nathaneal Green, NC, F-12 Company 425 (Rainbow Springs) {Jolley, *That Magnificent* 103}



The Hospital, Mess Hall and some of the garages



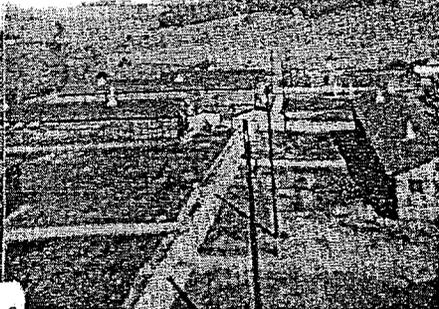
looking to the back of camp from the water tower



This is looking down to the back of camp



This is the front end of camp along the highway



This is looking down at the main walks. The mess Hall is on the right

THE CCC CAMP AT BAYWOOD

Figure 39 – CCC camp pictures from *Baywood* (Davis 217)



Figure 40 – African American CCC workers on the job – location unknown (National Archives)



Figure 41 – African American CCC enrollees stand at attention – location unknown (National Archives)

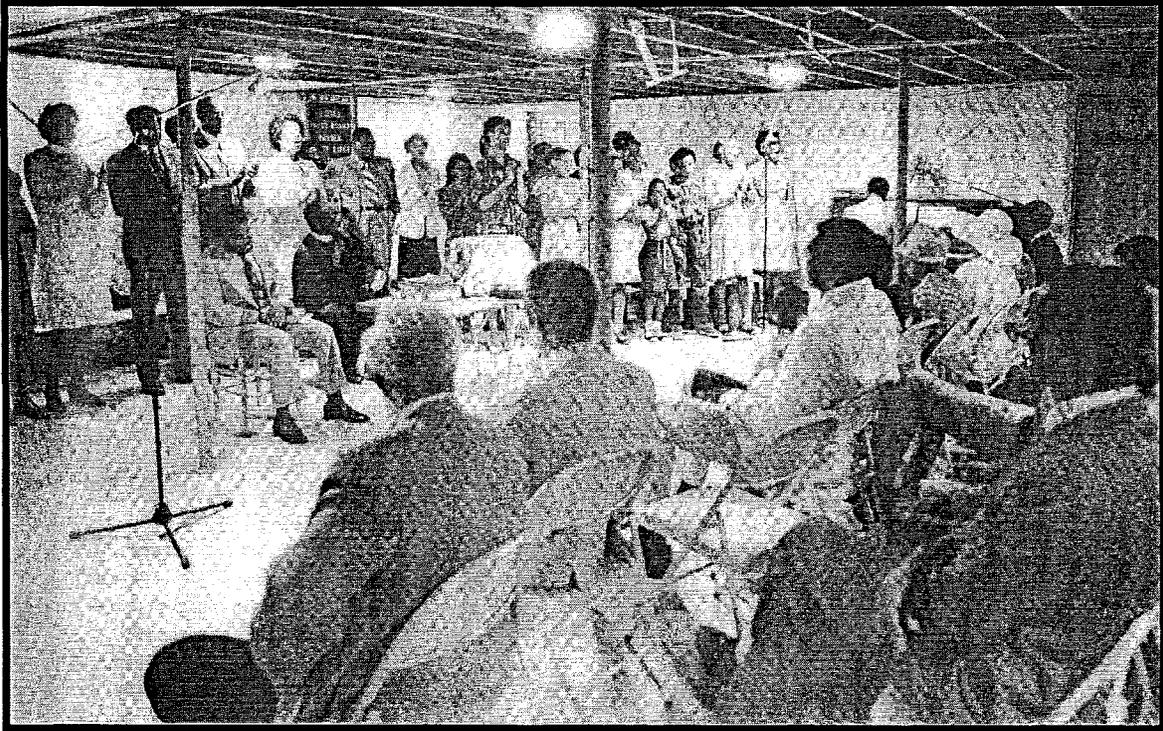


Figure 42 – Clarks Creek Progressive Primitive Baptist Church – 1978 (*Children of the Heav'nly King: Religious Expression in the Central Blue Ridge*)



Figure 43 – Macedonia Union Baptist – 1978 (*Children of the Heav'nly King: Religious Expression in the Central Blue Ridge*)



Figure 44 – Leonard and Mamie Bryan – 1978 (*Children of the Heav'nly King: Religious Expression in the Central Blue Ridge*)

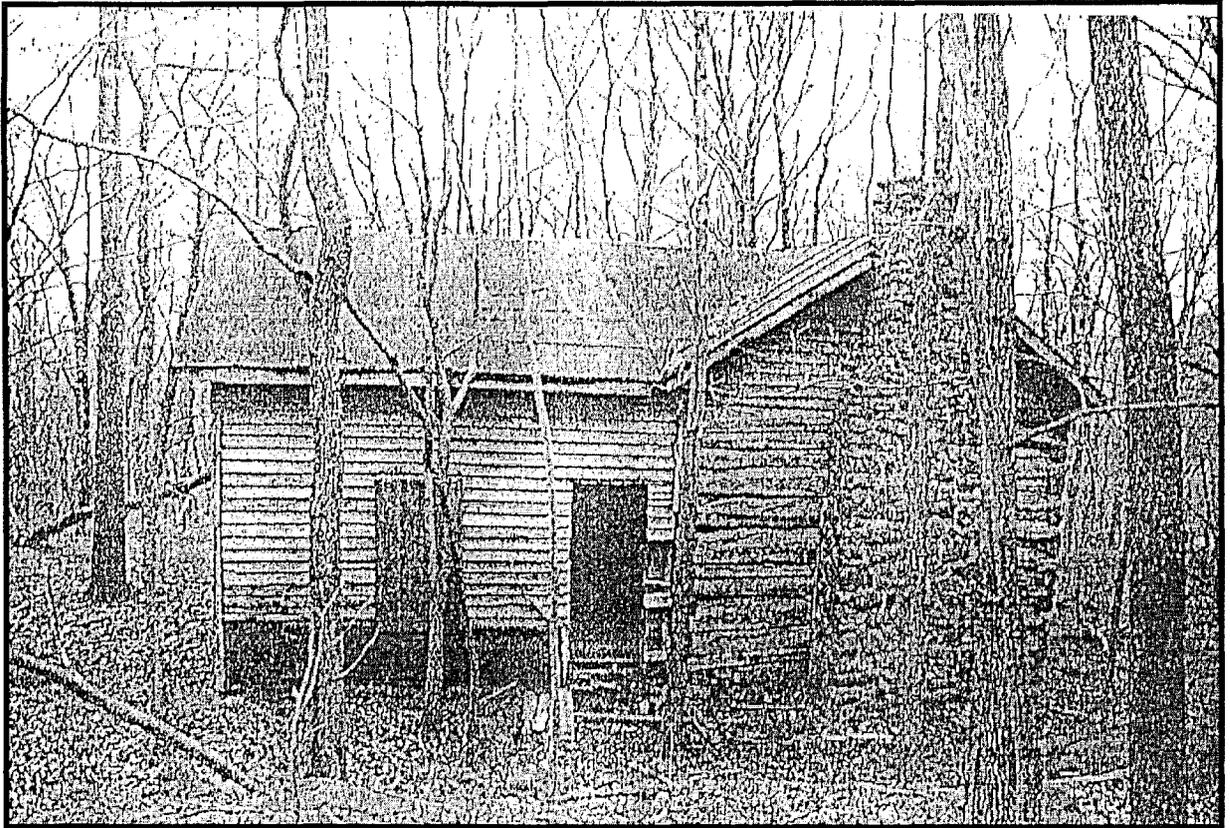


Figure 45 - Saunders Farm Cabin (NPS 2005)

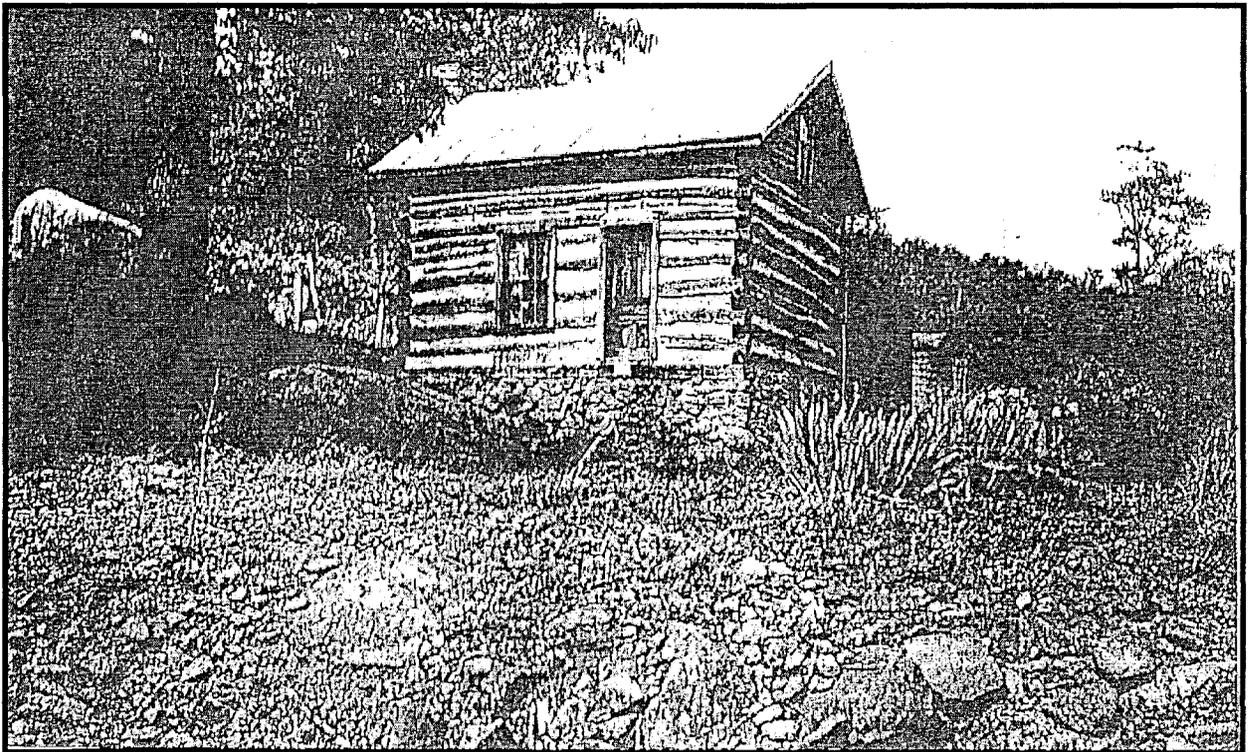


Figure 46 – Saunders Farm Cabin – 1949 (NPS, BLRI Coll.)

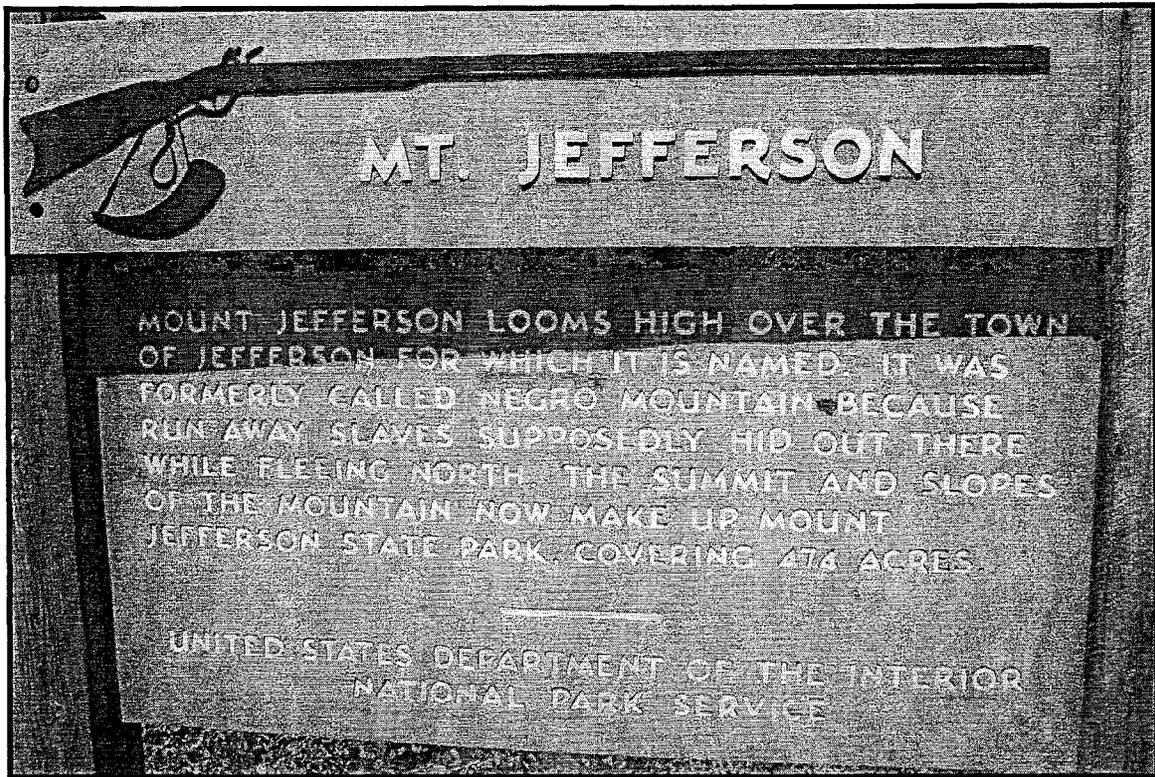


Figure 47 – Mt Jefferson Overlook Sign – Negro Mountain (photo by Rebecca Jones 2009)

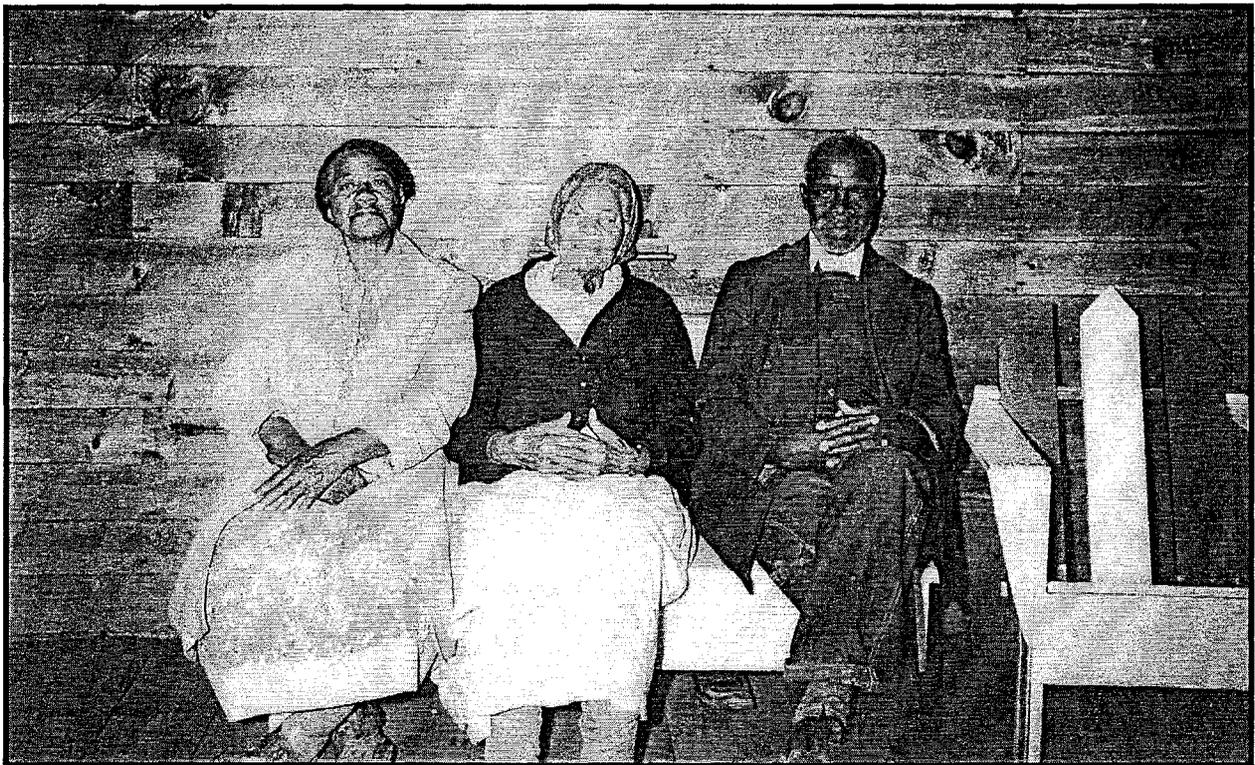


Figure 48 – Aunt Lizzie Price (middle) with her son, Matt and his wife (BLRI Coll.)

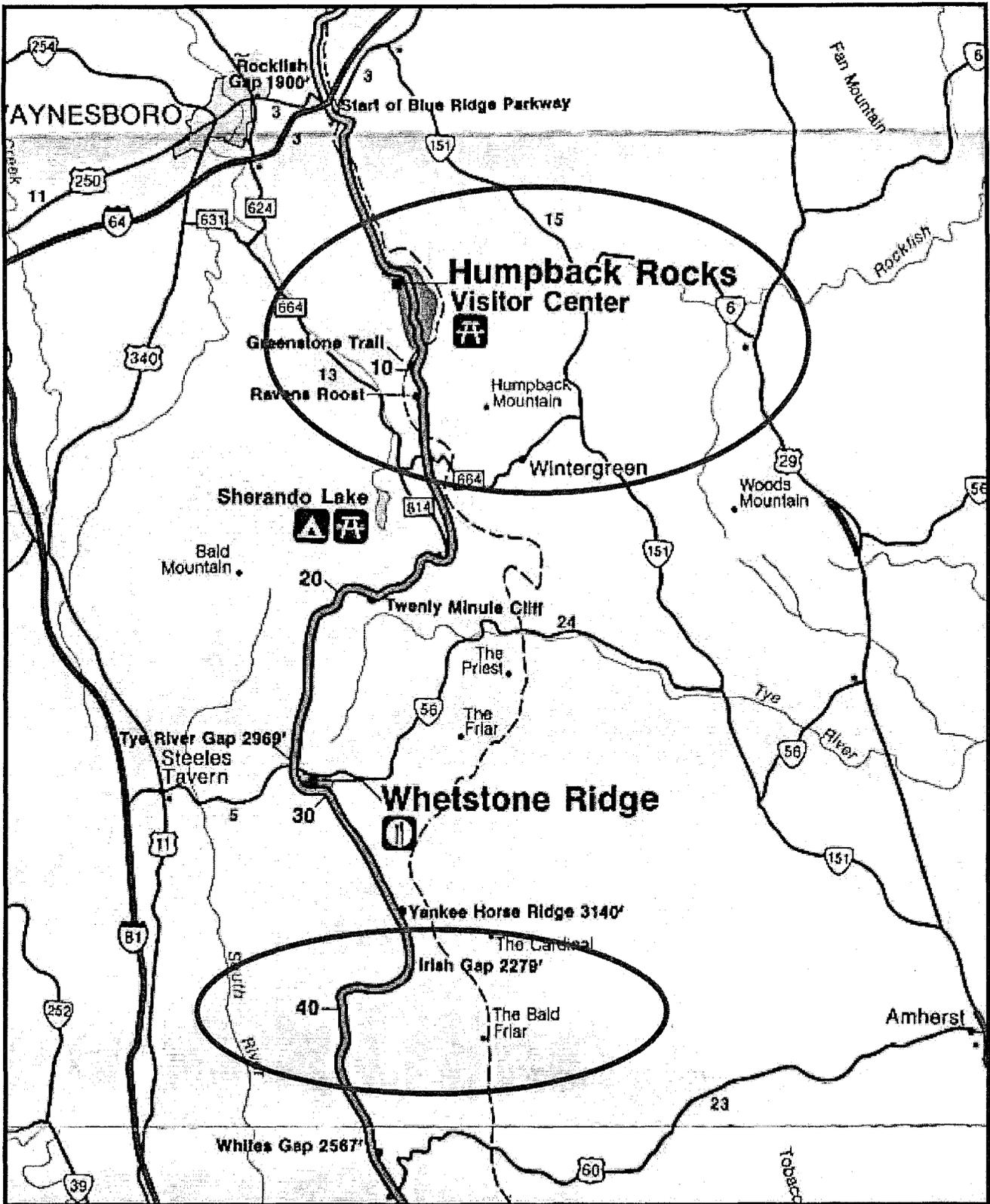


Figure 49 – Humpback Rocks – slaves built stone walls – Irish Gap – “isha” community