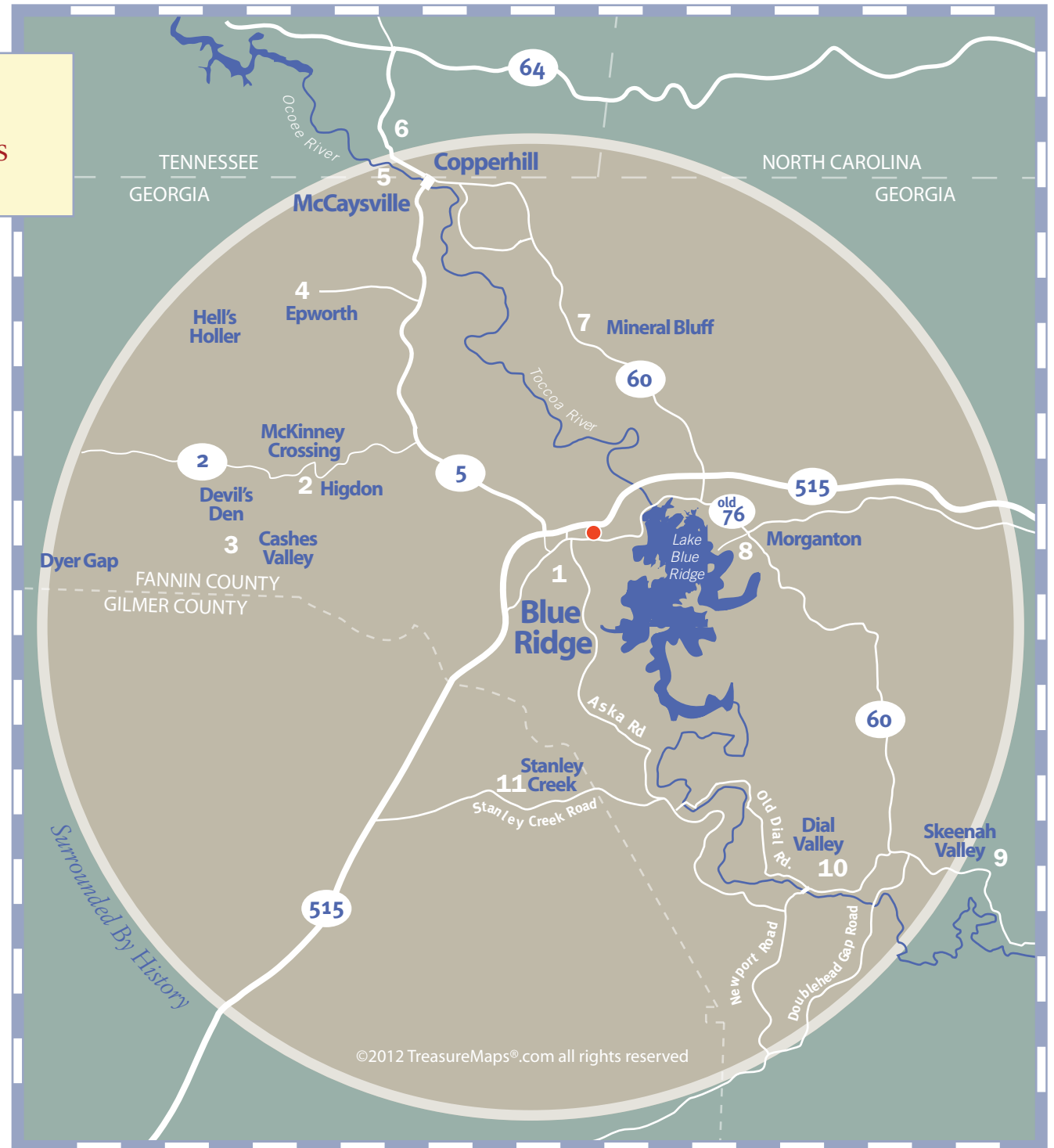


FANNIN COUNTY HISTORY: TOWNS & RURAL COMMUNITIES

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FANNIN COUNTY HISTORY: TOWNS & RURAL COMMUNITIES

Fannin County

Fannin County was founded in 1854 from lands in Gilmer and Union Counties. The county was named for Col. James Walker Fannin, who fought for the independence of Texas and was killed in the Goliad Massacre after the fall of the Alamo. Prior to that time, the land belonged to the Cherokee Indians. The fate of the Cherokee in North Georgia was sealed when gold was discovered in Dahlonega in 1829. Georgia's gold rush created more problems between the settlers and the Indians, and in 1830 The U.S. Congress passed the Cherokee Removal Act, which ultimately resulted in the tragic "Trail of Tears." In 1860, the first Fannin County census counted 900 families or 5,139 residents. When the Civil War began in 1861, most residents were small subsistence farmers, who had little interest in the slave issue and had mixed loyalties, some for the south, some for the north.

Rural Communities and Settlements

Some of the most unique and fascinating features of Fannin County are its historic rural communities and settlements. These "hollers" or coves are often in isolated and remote areas surrounded by mountains and nestled along the banks of a picturesque stream or river.

1 Blue Ridge

The town of Blue Ridge was established soon after the arrival of the Marietta and North Georgia Railroad in 1886. Blue Ridge has an elevation of 1,751 feet and was at one time the highest railroad point in Georgia. In 1890, the population of Blue Ridge was only 264, but it grew to 1,184 by 1900. In 1895, the county seat was moved from Morganton to Blue Ridge. Blue Ridge flourished and many businesses were established, including a carriage shop, railway repair and maintenance shops and the Blue Ridge Inn. According to early sources, "Blue Ridge's climate was conducive to tourists. Many rode the passenger train into town to spend holidays and vacations." An advertisement in 1939 in "Bullet and Creel" magazine called Blue Ridge "The Switzerland of the South."

2 McKinney Crossing/Higdon on Fightingtown Creek

Located about 3 miles out Highway 2, McKinney Crossing is typical of an early settlement, which would have included a church, small store, post office, possibly a school and several family homesteads. The old house is well over 100 years old, with a stacked stone chimney. The McKinney family ran a grist mill and had a general store across the street.

3 Hell's Holler, Devil's Den and Cashes Valley

Other rural communities in this part of the county include Hell's Holler, named for its rowdy reputation and because moonshine was made there. Devil's Den, nearby, was also a lawless and notorious section of Fannin County. Today, you're more likely to find a horse stable than a moonshine still in Cashes Valley. Be sure and go horseback riding at Adventure Trail Rides or Blanche Manor.

4 Epworth

The town of Epworth has been known by several names. It was first called Fightingtown by the Cherokee Indians, and later called Camp Ground, because of the camp meetings held there prior to 1900. In 1897, a post office was established called Atalla, and for four years it took that name. In 1901, both the post office and the town's name changed to Epworth, after Epworth, England, birthplace of the founders of Methodism, Charles and John Wesley. Toccoa Falls and Appalachian Technical College are located on the hill where the Epworth Seminary once stood. Earlier buildings were constructed in 1902.

5 McCaysville

McCaysville, chartered in 1904, is located on the Georgia-Tennessee state line adjacent to Copperhill, Tennessee, its twin city. You can actually have one foot in Georgia and one foot in Tennessee when you cross the Blue Line marking the place where the states meet. Toccoa Avenue (Georgia) turns into Ocoee Street (Tennessee) while the Toccoa River becomes the Ocoee River under an old iron bridge built in 1911 and still standing. Actually, Copperhill was originally called McCays and McCaysville was Hawkinsville! H.T. McCay bought a farm on the Copperhill side of the river and Aaron Matthews bought a farm on the McCaysville side. They built a ferry where the old river bridge is now and one operated it for one month and then the other.

6 The Copper Basin

Discovery of copper occurred in 1843 in an area now known as Ducktown. By 1847, it is recorded that 90 cakes of ore were transported over poor trails to the railroad at Dalton. In the spring of 1899 the Tennessee Copper Company began smelting works near McCays and the town grew rapidly. Grading for the company railroad began and a shaft was sunk for the Burra Burra Mine in Ducktown. Learn more about the mining history of the Copper Basin at the Burra Burra Mine historic mine site in Ducktown.

7 Mineral Bluff

Mineral Bluff was first settled in 1842, but wasn't incorporated until 1895, when the railroad brought a period of affluence to the town. At one time, Mineral Bluff had five stores, a grist mill, livery stable, hotel, post office, small jail and a train

depot. A tannery began operation in 1904. Today, the Mineral Bluff Depot, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, is being restored to be the home of the Tri-State Model Railroad Club.

8 Morganton

Morganton was the first Fannin County seat and oldest town. The town was founded in 1854 and incorporated in 1856. Morganton was named for Revolutionary War hero Daniel Morgan. The town is located on the east shore of Lake Blue Ridge. Morganton Point Recreation Area is near the town.

9 Skeenah Valley

The Old Skeenah Mill, on Highway 60 between Morganton and Suches, was built in 1848 by Willis Woody, who brought his family to the Skeenah Valley (named after the Cherokee word for "black bear") in 1839. The Mill is listed on the National Register. A water-powered sawmill was also located on the creek. The Skeenah Mill was once a popular place for neighbors to gather and chat as they waited for their wheat or corn to be ground.

10 Dial Valley

The earliest rural settlement in Fannin County was Dial, which was settled in 1834. A drive through the Dial community is like a step back in time. Be sure to stop and see the old iron bridge crossing the Toccoa River. There is a Cherokee Indian fish trap, visible as a distinct "V" in the river on the east side of the bridge. Next is the Cochran-Davenport house, built in 1885 by George Cochran for his bride. All the outbuildings for this small farmstead remain intact, including an interesting spring house on the south.

11 Stanley Creek

Stanley Creek Road, off of Aska Road, is the entrance to the Rich Mountain Wildlife Management Area. Stanley Creek Road turns to dirt in the Rich Mountain area and ends in Gilmer County at Cherry Log (Rock Creek Road). For a short hike to Fall Branch Falls, follow Stanley Creek 3 miles, just past Forest Warden Garfield Stanley's home. The trailhead is marked with the Benton MacKaye white diamond. Hike in is ¼ mile to the base, following the white diamonds.



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