

# The Most Misunderstood Region in the Country: Seven Lessons

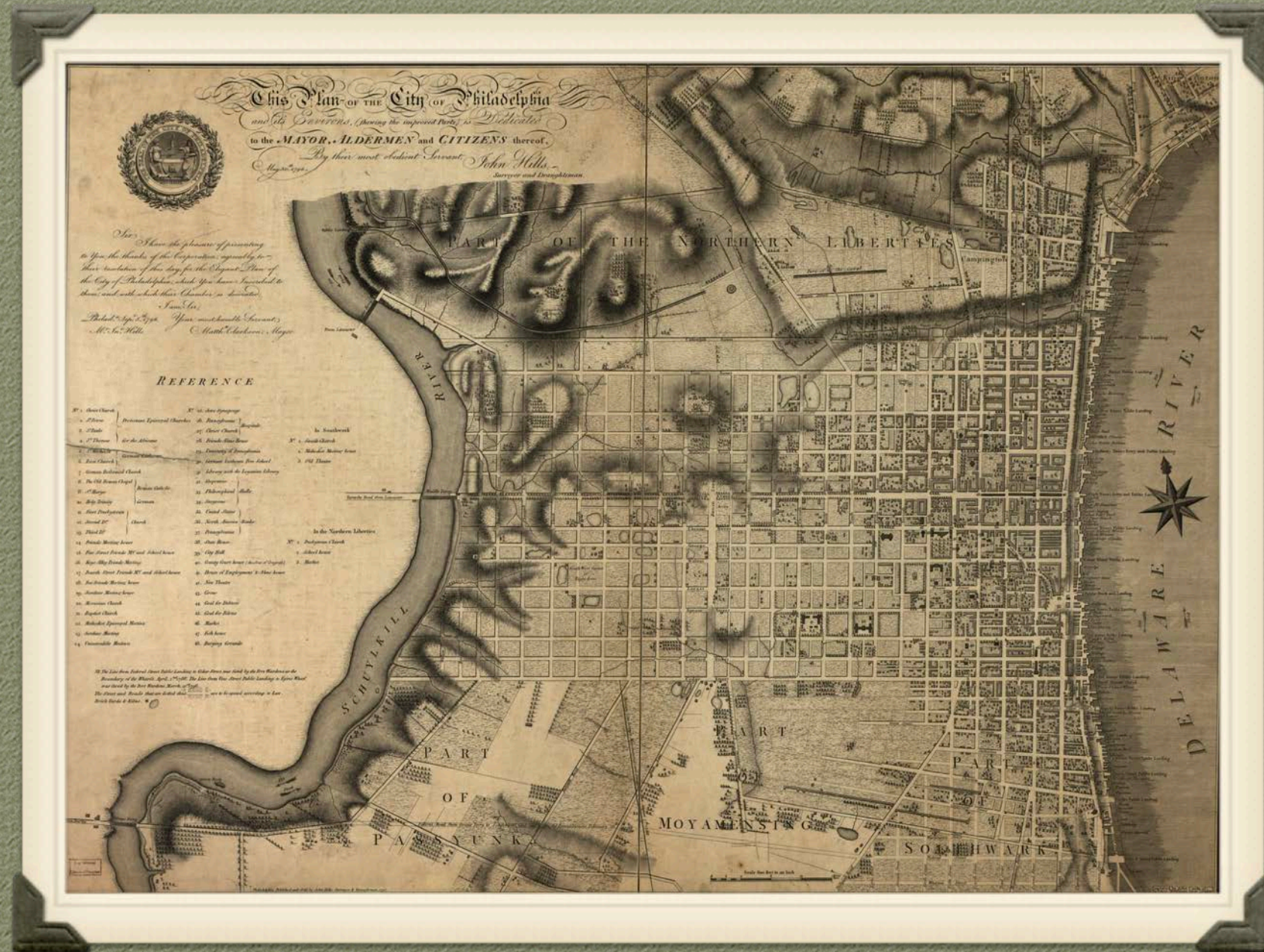
Chad Berry



*Physical geography has dictated  
settlement patterns and histories.*

-Lesson #1





1795  
generation 1





Ohio

Columbus

Cincinnati

West Virginia

Charleston

Frankfort

Lexington

Kentucky

PLATEAU

APPALACHIAN

MOUNTAINS

Virginia

James River

Roanoke

John H. Reser

Mt. Rogers  
5725

Calloway Peak  
5964

Mt. Mitchell  
6684

Greensboro

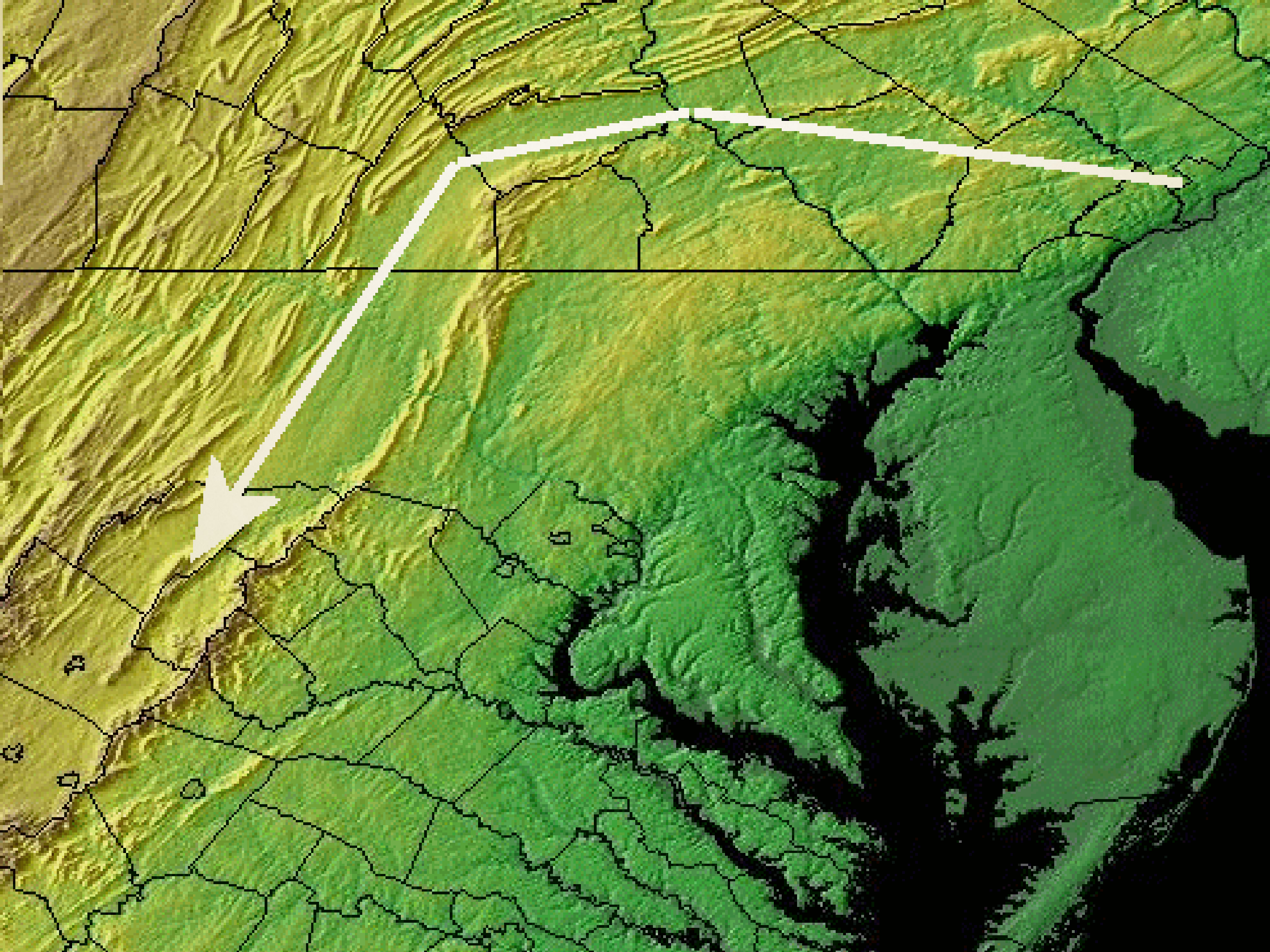
Durham

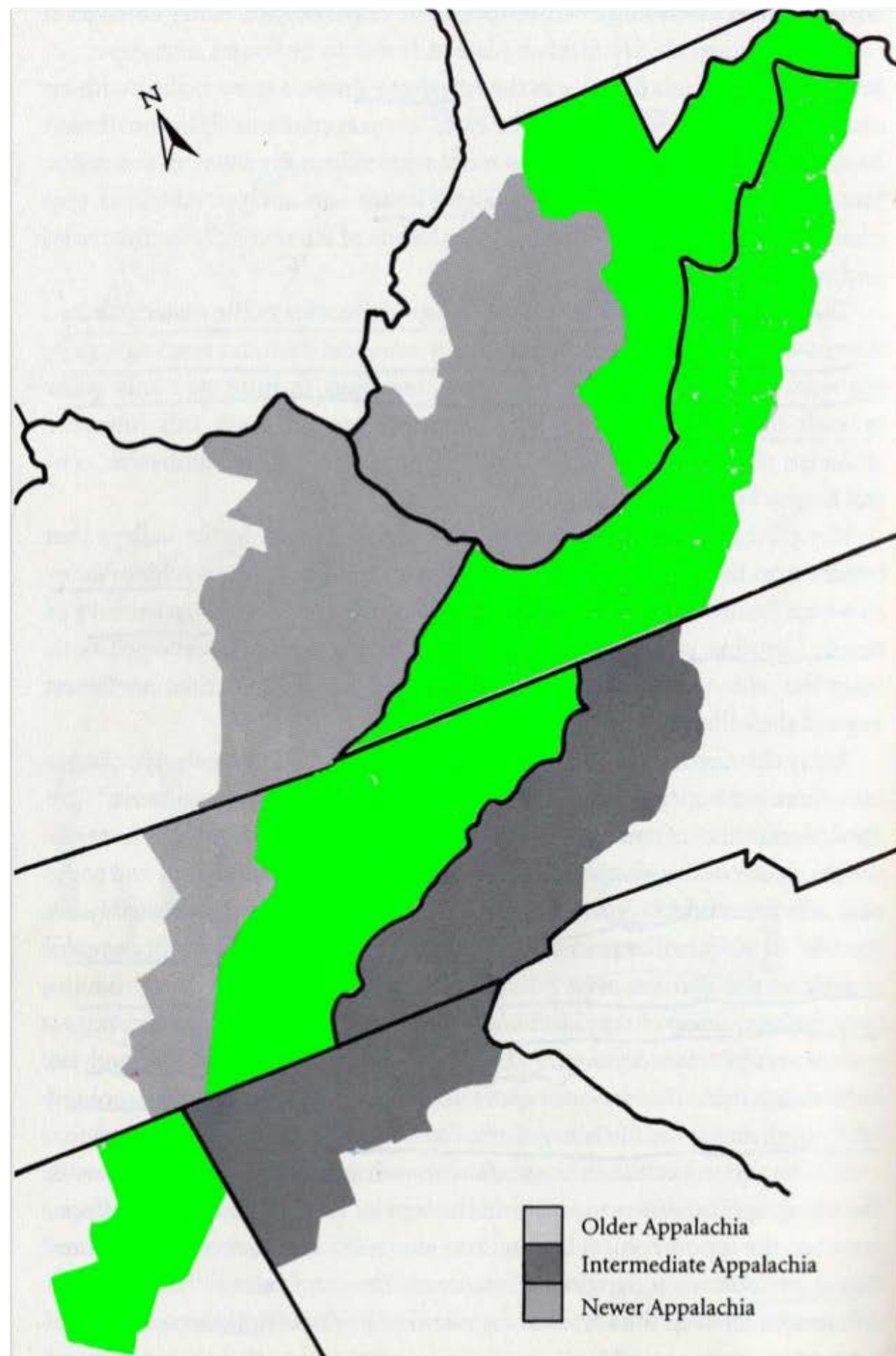
North Carolina

Charlotte

ans D  
6643









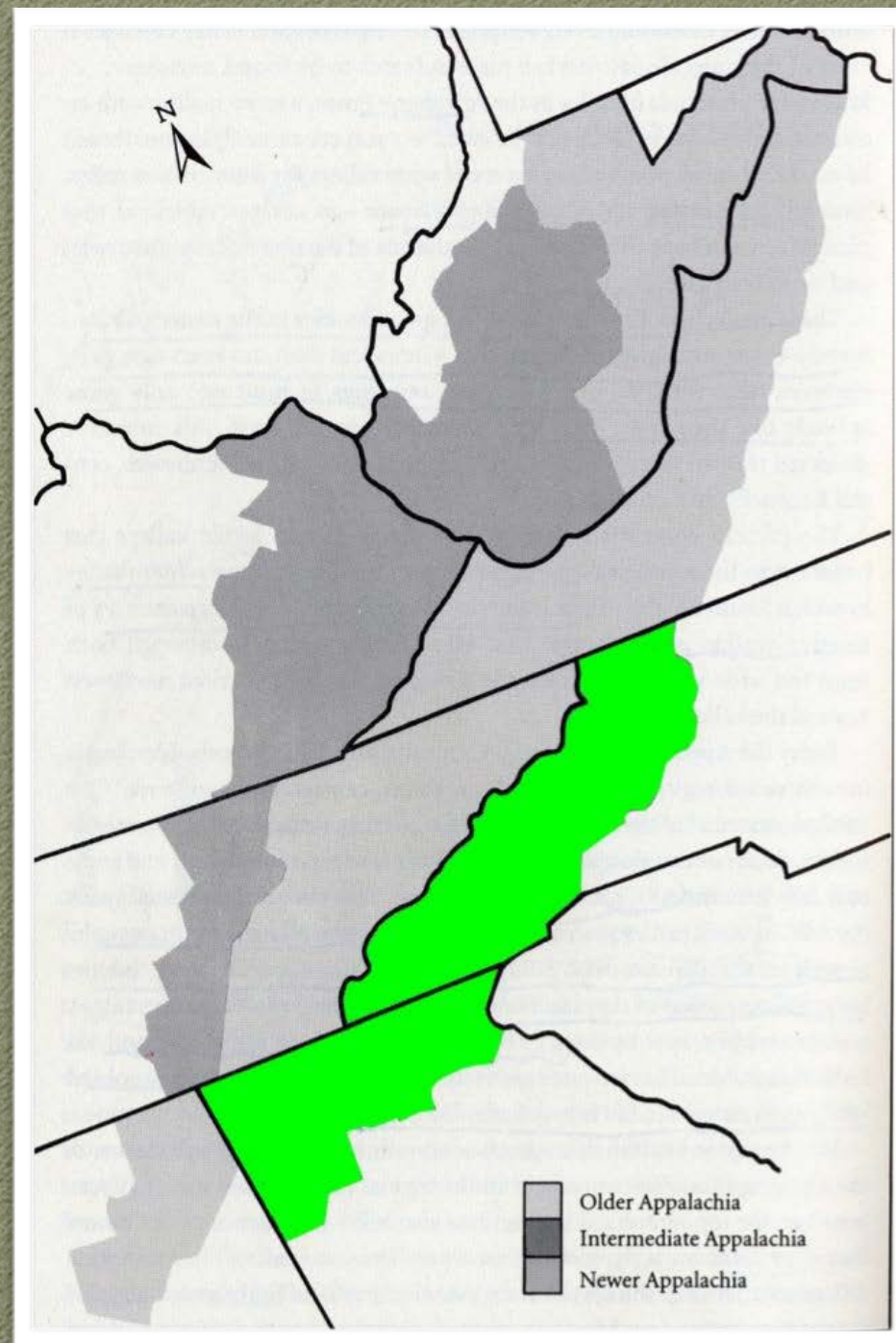
# an Economic Frontier

- Rapid population growth
- Plenty of natural resources to exploit
- High economic opportunity

*Until the Civil War, middling economic prosperity across much of Appalachia was relatively widespread.*

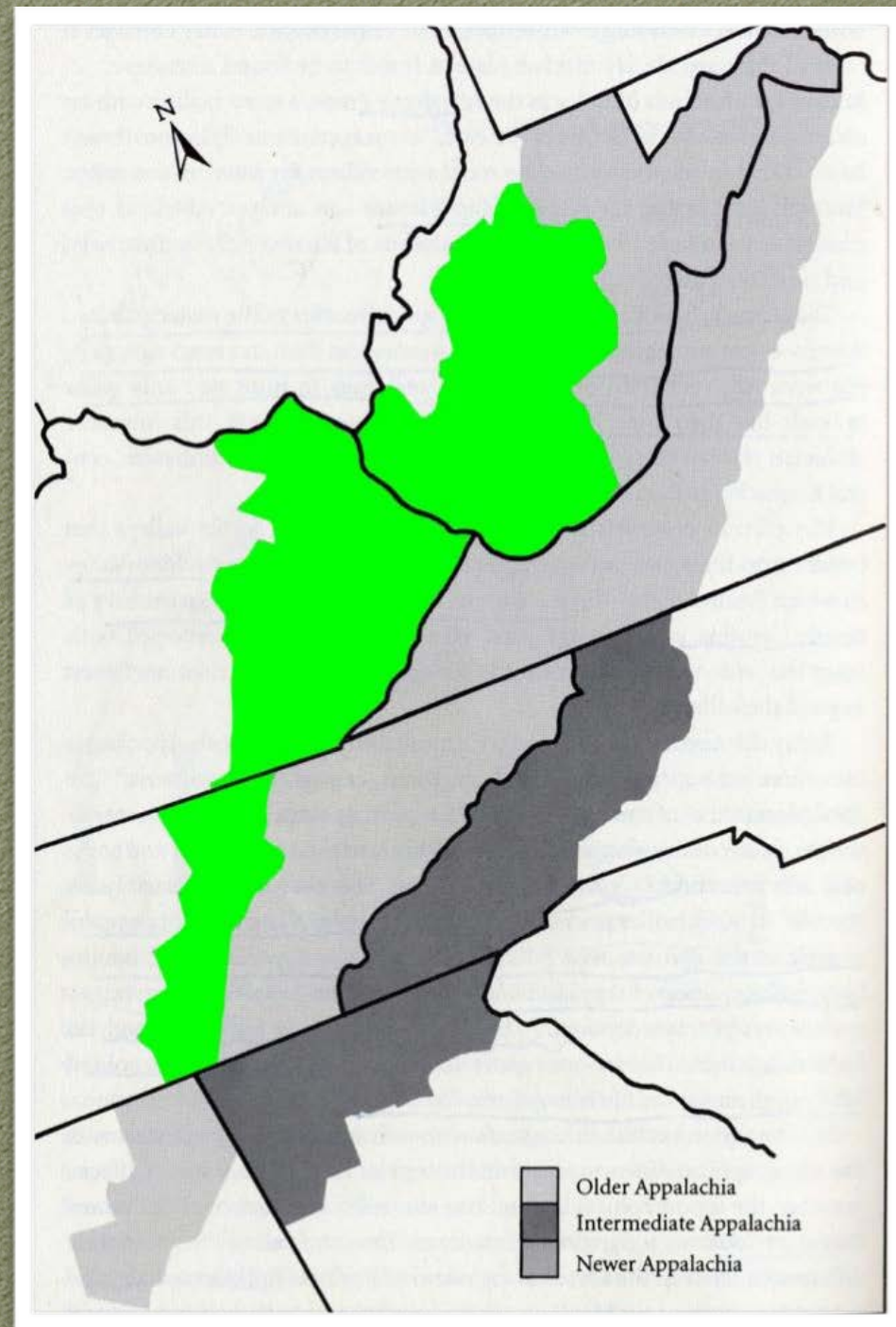
-Lesson #2





1840  
generation 2





1880  
Generation 3





1910

generation 4





*Acute economic challenges emerged when there was no viable economic frontier to which young people could migrate.*

-Lesson #3





## LESLIE COUNTY, KENTUCKY

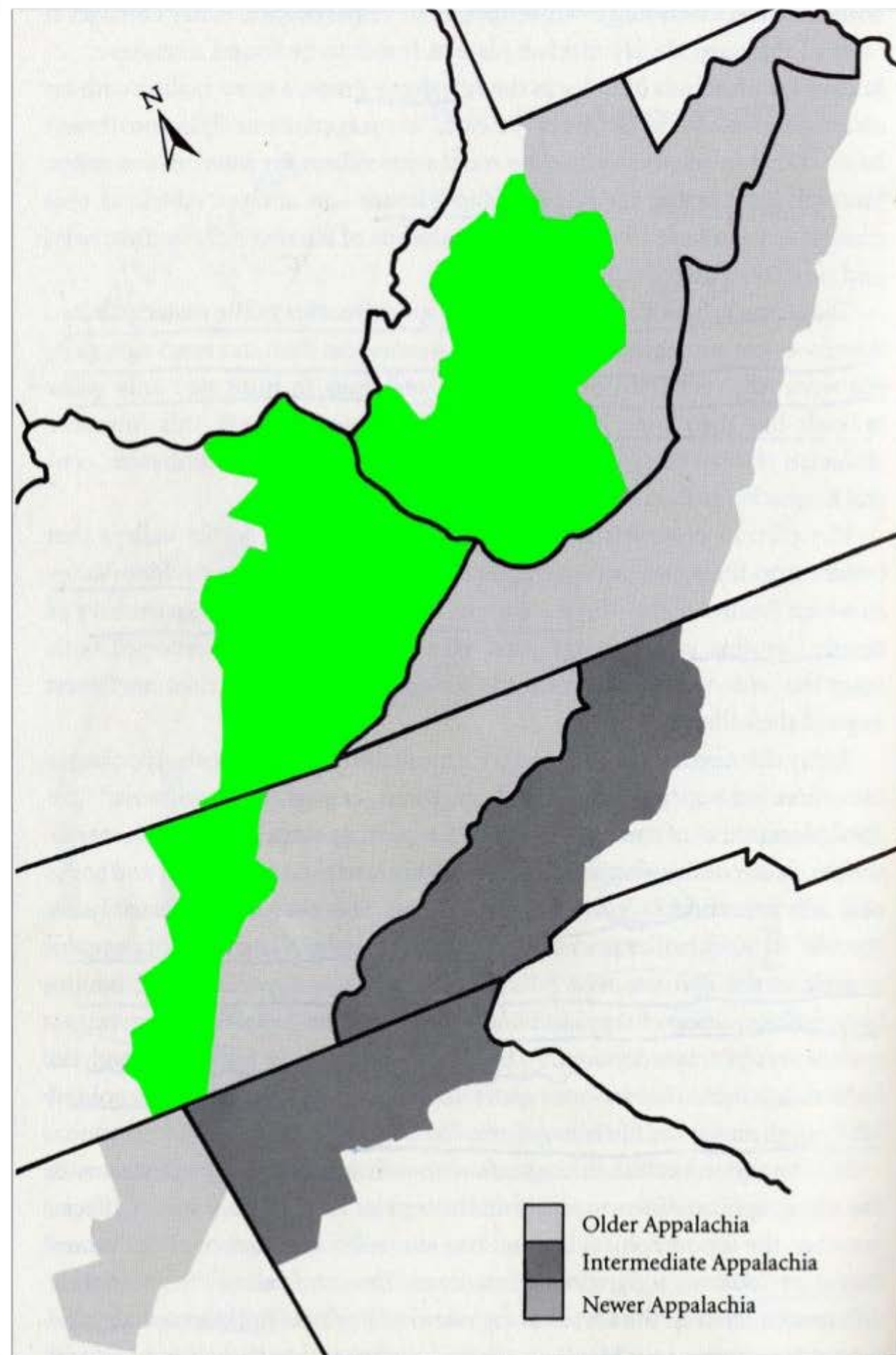




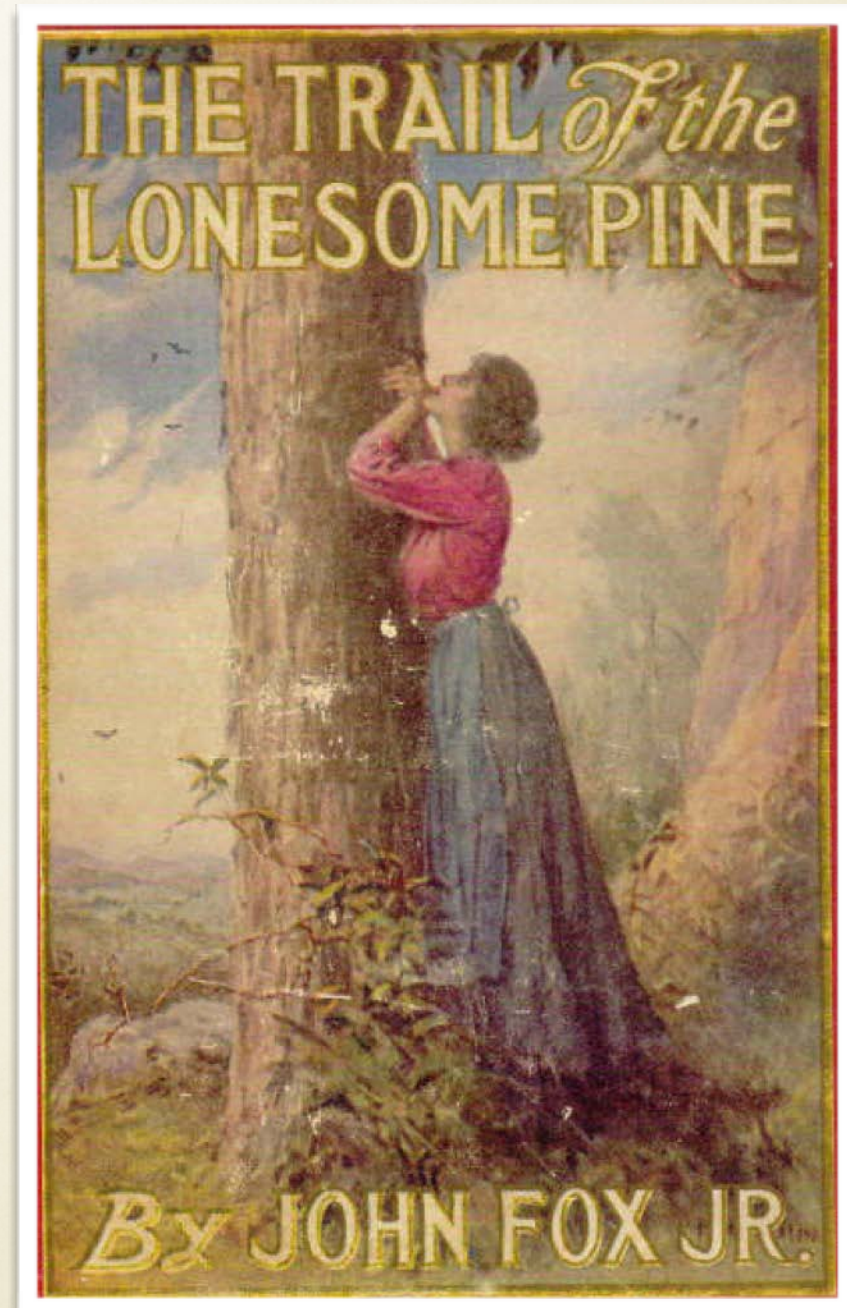
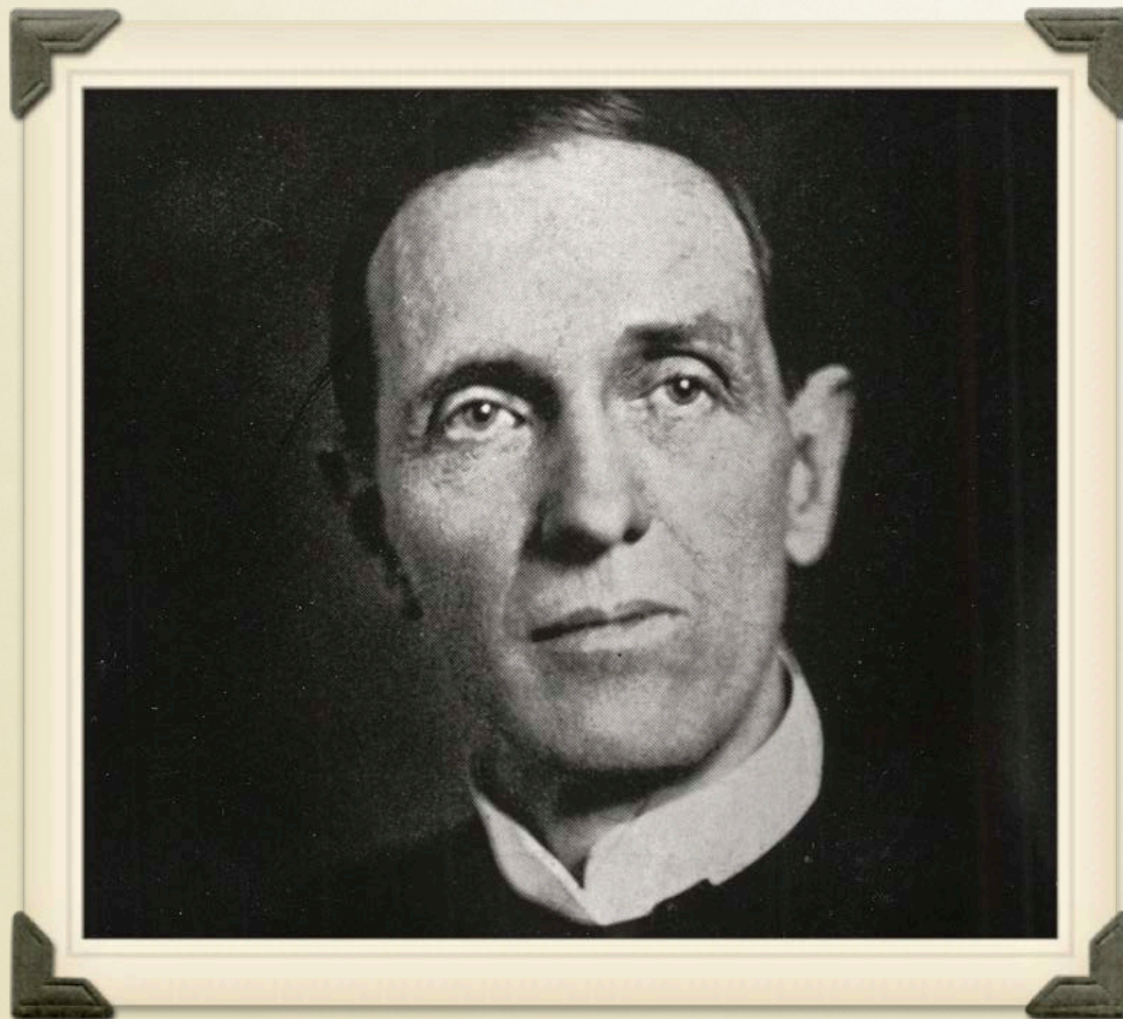
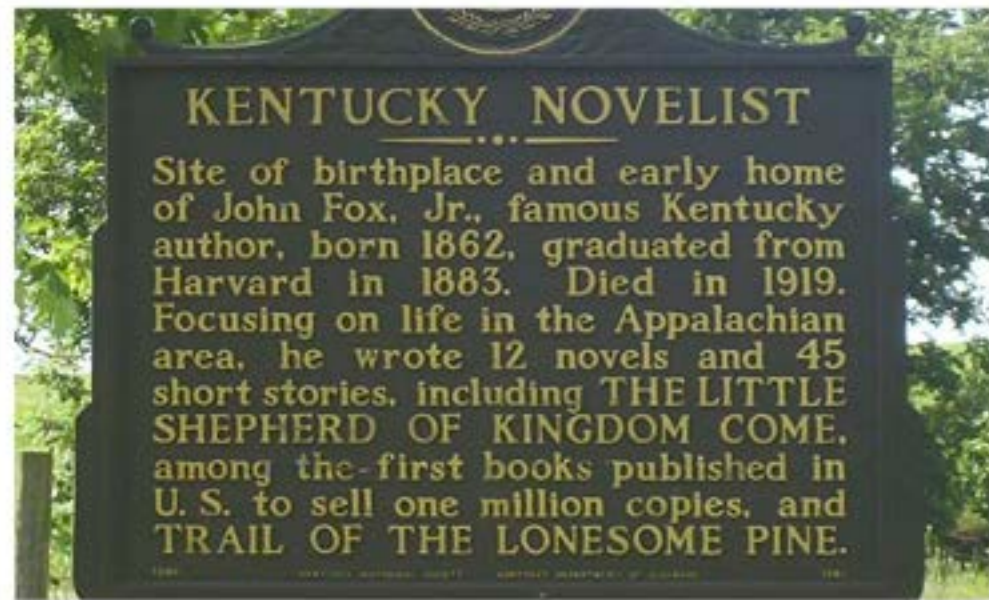
*“Appalachia” is a social and cultural construct. And how and when it was constructed still influences the way we think of the region and its people today.*

-Lesson #4











*Consequently, we have been taught  
to conceive of the people and region  
in a bifurcated way.*

-Lesson #5







*“Appalachia” serves a particular function in the U.S. If Appalachia hadn’t been constructed, another region would likely have been created to take its place.*

-Lesson #6



*“Beginning in the 1870s and 1880s, Americans perceived Appalachia as a strange place inhabited by ‘peculiar’ people. This perception...came not from...reality of but from the needs of middle-class Americans in industrializing America to project their own nostalgia for the past and fears about the future onto a people perceived as different. Appalachia became the ‘other,’ a place and a people to be admired, patronized, converted, taught, uplifted, disciplined, and sometimes even emulated.”*

-Altina Waller, “Feuding in Appalachia: Evolution of a Cultural Stereotype,” in *Appalachia in the Making* (Chapel Hill, 1995), 349.



*There is no such thing as  
Appalachian culture.*

*Cultures in Appalachia? Yes.*

*And all of those are a mixture of  
continuity and change.*

-Lesson #7



*“...[Y]ou cannot know a place without loving it and hating it and feeling everything in between. You cannot understand a complex people by only looking at data — something inside you has to crack to let in the light so your eyes and brain and heart can adjust properly.”*

-Silas House, “I am That Smudge,” *Courier-Journal*, July 28, 2014.