

**THE EVOLUTION OF EARLY EAST TENNESSEE COUNTY BOUNDARIES:
THE FIRST TREATY OF TELlico (1798) AND RESULTING ALTERATIONS
IN THE BLOUNT, KNOX, AND GRAINGER BOUNDARIES;
COCKE/GREENE ALTERATION (1799)**

René Jordan, Editor
Tennessee Ancestors

[NOTE: This is the eleventh in a series of articles which began in the April 1994 issue.]

First Treaty of Tellico

Under the Treaty of Holston (1791), the Cherokees had relinquished their title to all lands east of the Clinch River and north of a line from near Kingston to the North Carolina boundary (see August 1995 article in this series). The line, however, was not surveyed till 1797 by Benjamin Hawkins. The survey revealed that a number of settlers were beyond the line, probably because the Treaty of Coyatee (1786) between the Cherokees and the ill-fated State of Franklin had permitted white settlement as far south as the Little Tennessee River.¹

There was vigorous objection when these settlers were forced to move back across Hawkins' line. As a result, Congress entered into new negotiations with the Cherokees, who, under the First Treaty of Tellico (2 October 1798), ceded two additional tracts of land to the Tennesseans.² The first was the controversial area south of Hawkins' line; the second, a bonus, was between the Clinch River and the eastern edge of the Cumberland Plateau:

From a point on the Tennessee river, below Tellico block-house, called the

Wild-cat Rock, in a direct line to the Militia spring, near the Mary-ville road leading from Tellico. From the said spring to the Chill-howie mountain, by a line so to be run, as will leave all the farms on Nine-mile Creek to the northward and eastward of it; and to be continued along Chill-howie mountain, until it strikes Hawkins's line. Thence along the said line to the great Iron mountain; . . . From the place of be-ginning, the Wild-cat Rock, down the northeast margin of the Tennessee river (not including islands) to a point or place one mile above the junction of that river with the Clinch, and from thence by a line to be drawn in a right angle, until it intersects Hawkins's line leading from Clinch. Thence down the said line to the river Clinch; thence up the said river to its junction with Emmerly's river; and thence up Emmerly's river to the foot of Cumberland mountain. From thence a line to be drawn, northeastwardly, along the foot of the mountain, until it intersects with Campbell's line [1771 Treaty of Long Island line].³

This treaty line is fairly easy to trace accurately since (a) the geo-graphical reference points (Wild-cat Rock, Militia Spring, mountains, creeks, and rivers) can still be identified on modern maps;

¹ Stanley Folmsbee, et al., Tennessee: A Short History (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), p. 146.

² *Ibid.*

³ Charles C. Royce, The Cherokee Nation of Indians: A Narrative of Their Official Relations with the Colonial and Federal Governments (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1887), p. 174-75. [From the Bureau of Ethnology's 5th Annual Report.]

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(b) Campbell's line was well established; and (c) Royce's book includes a map showing the treaty lines! (See Figure 1.) Hawkins' line is the biggest uncertainty. Some sources locate it slightly north of Maryville; others a little south.

Blount Boundary Extended

Just two months later, the Tennessee legislature altered the Blount County line to conform to the new treaty:

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, That from and after the passing of this act, the county of Blount shall be contained within the following described bounds: Beginning upon the south side of Holston, at the mouth of Little river; thence up the meanders of Little river on the south side, to the mouth of Stock creek, and up the meanders of Stock creek upon the south side, to the head of Nicholas Bartlett's mill pond at high water; thence a direct line to the top of Bay's mountain, leaving the house of James Willis to the right, within forty rod of said line; thence along Bay's mountain to the line of the county of Sevier; thence with that line to the eastern boundary of the state; thence southwardly with the said eastern boundary to the line lately run and marked agreeably to the late treaty between the United States and the Cherokee Indians, and with that line to the river Tennessee; thence down the Tennessee with the meanders thereof to the mouth of Holston, and thence up the meanders of said river Holston to the beginning.⁴

The first part of the boundary follows the original Blount line till it strikes Chilhowee Mountain, then follows the Tellico Treaty line to the mouth of the "Holston" River. At this time, the river

was called Holston all the way down to the juncture (near Lenoir City) with what is now called the Little Tennessee River. Figure 2 shows the expanded boundaries of Blount County.

Knox Boundary Extended

A few days later, the Knox County boundary also was extended as a result of the new treaty:

That from and after the tenth day of January, instant, the county of Knox shall be contained in the following described limits or bounds: beginning upon the south side of Holston at the mouth of Little river, thence up the meanders of Little river upon the south side to the mouth of Stock creek, and up the meanders of Stock creek upon the south side to the head of Nicholas Bartlett's Mill pond at high waters, thence a direct line to the top of Bay's mountain, leaving the house of James Willis within forty rod to the right hand, thence with the extreme height of the said mountain to its intersection with the river French Broad, a small distance below the house in which Andrew Evans lived, in the year of one thousand, seven hundred and ninety-six, thence across French Broad to a ridge, the continuation of the said mountain, which ridge or continuation of the said mountain, divides the waters of Tuckahoe creek, from those of Dumplin creek, and with the extreme height of that ridge or mountain to the line run by Greer, Bayles, and M'Cleary, in the year of one thousand, seven hundred and ninety-six, thence with that line to the mouth of Criswell's creek, thence up the Holston to the upper end of the first Bluff above Boyles's old place, thence with the ridge which divides the waters of Richland creek from those of Flat creek to the end of Clinch mountain, thence a north west course to Clinch River, thence down said river opposite the end of the Cross mountain, thence with said mountain to the Indian boundary line at Cumberland mountain, and with Cumberland mountain agreeably to the treaty lately entered into at or near Tellico, between the United States

⁴ Henry D. Whitney, The Land Laws of Tennessee (Chattanooga, Tenn.: Deardorff & Sons, 1891), p. 617.

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and the Cherokees to Emery's river, thence down Emery's river according to its meanders to the river Clinch, and down the Clinch to the point where the line of the said treaty strikes the said river, and with that line to the river Tennessee, thence up the meanders of that river to the point formed by the junction of the Holston therewith, thence up the Holston with its meanders upon the south side to the mouth of Little river.⁵

The description follows the previous Knox line until it reaches the portion referring to Cross Mountain. The end of Cross Mountain is approximately due west of Briceville. "[T]hence with said mountain to the Indian boundary line at Cumberland mountain. . ." doesn't make much sense since the Indian boundary was between Clinch River and Cross Mountain. The intent surely was a straight line from Clinch River to the Indian boundary opposite the foot of Cross Mountain. The rest of the boundary is straightforward (see Figure 3).

Grainger Boundary Affected

There is no act at this time altering the Grainger line, but the treaty line automatically excluded from white settlement a triangular area north of Cumberland Mountain and east of Eagan which I approximated to be part of the original Grainger County (see August 1996 article in this series).

In between the acts extending the bounds of Blount and Knox counties, the General Assembly also annexed a part of Greene County to Cocke:

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, That from and

⁵ Edward Scott, Laws of the State of Tennessee, Including Those of North Carolina, Now in Force in This State. From the Year 1715 to the Year 1820, Inclusive. Vol. I (Knoxville, Tenn.: Heiskell and Brown, 1821), p. 622-23.

*after the passing of this act, the line that divides the county of Greene from the county of Cocke, shall begin at the corner of Greene and Jefferson counties, on Nolichucky river, at the end of Bay's mountain, from thence up Nolichucky river to the mouth of Oven creek, from thence a direct line to major Gragg's, so as to leave his plantation in Greene county; from thence a direct line to the Painted Rock, on French Broad river, below the Warm Springs; from thence south to the Cocke county line, and all that part lying south of the said line shall be a part of Cocke county.*⁶

The present Greene/Cocke line runs directly from the mouth of Oven Creek to Paint Rock except for a jog around the mouth of Oven Creek. Not knowing the exact location of Major Gragg's plantation, I'm going to use the present line as an approximation of this 1799 alteration.

Figure 4 shows East Tennessee county boundaries after the Treaty of Tellico and the Cocke/Greene alteration. Note that there is an area between Clinch River and Cumberland Mountain, roughly what is now southeast Campbell County and northwest Union County, which is now open to white settlement but which is not included in any existing county.

These were the last East Tennessee county boundary changes of the eighteenth century, but the year 1801 was to bring profound changes in the county landscape.

⁶ Whitney, pp. 619-20.

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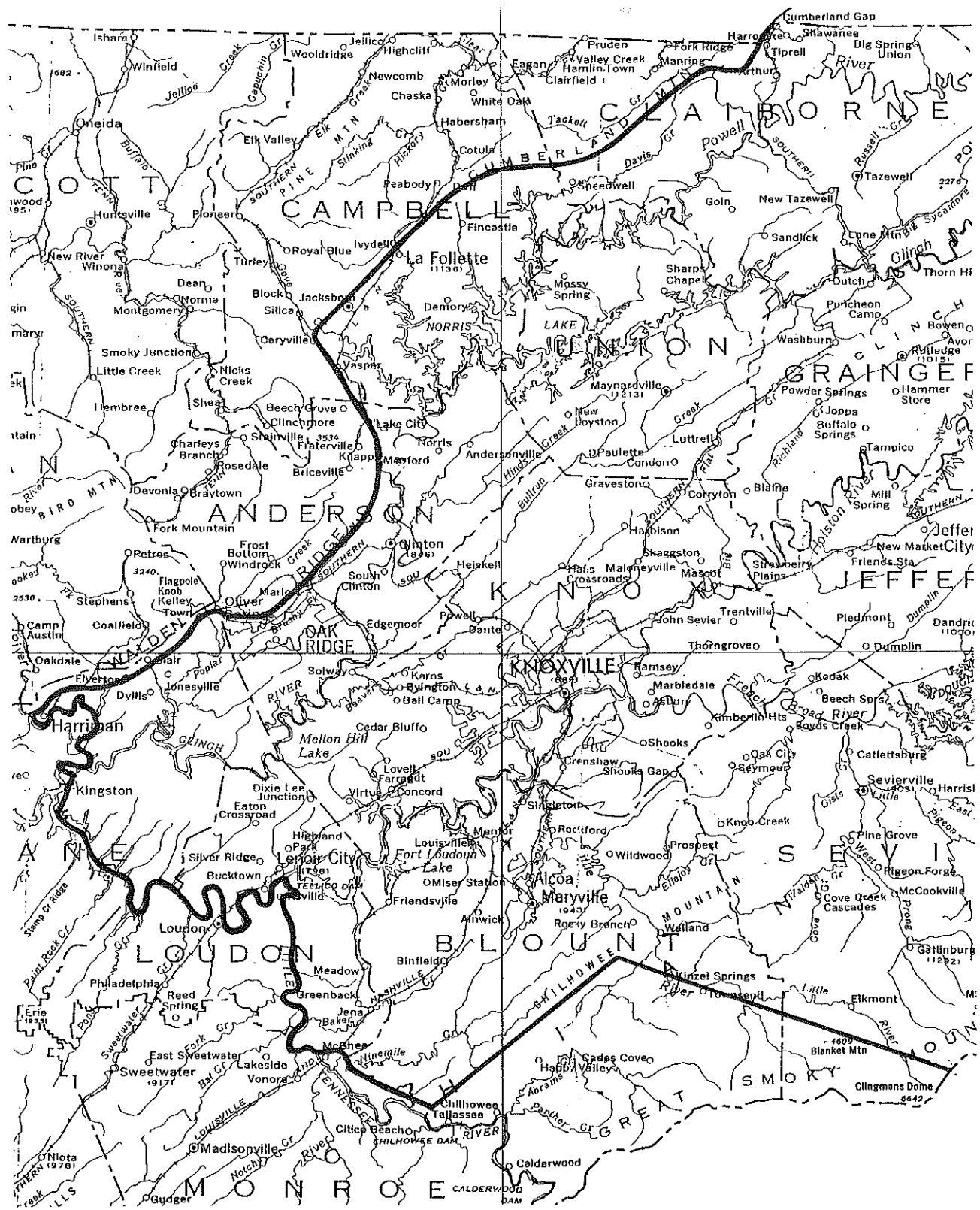


Figure 1. First Treaty of Tellico, 1798

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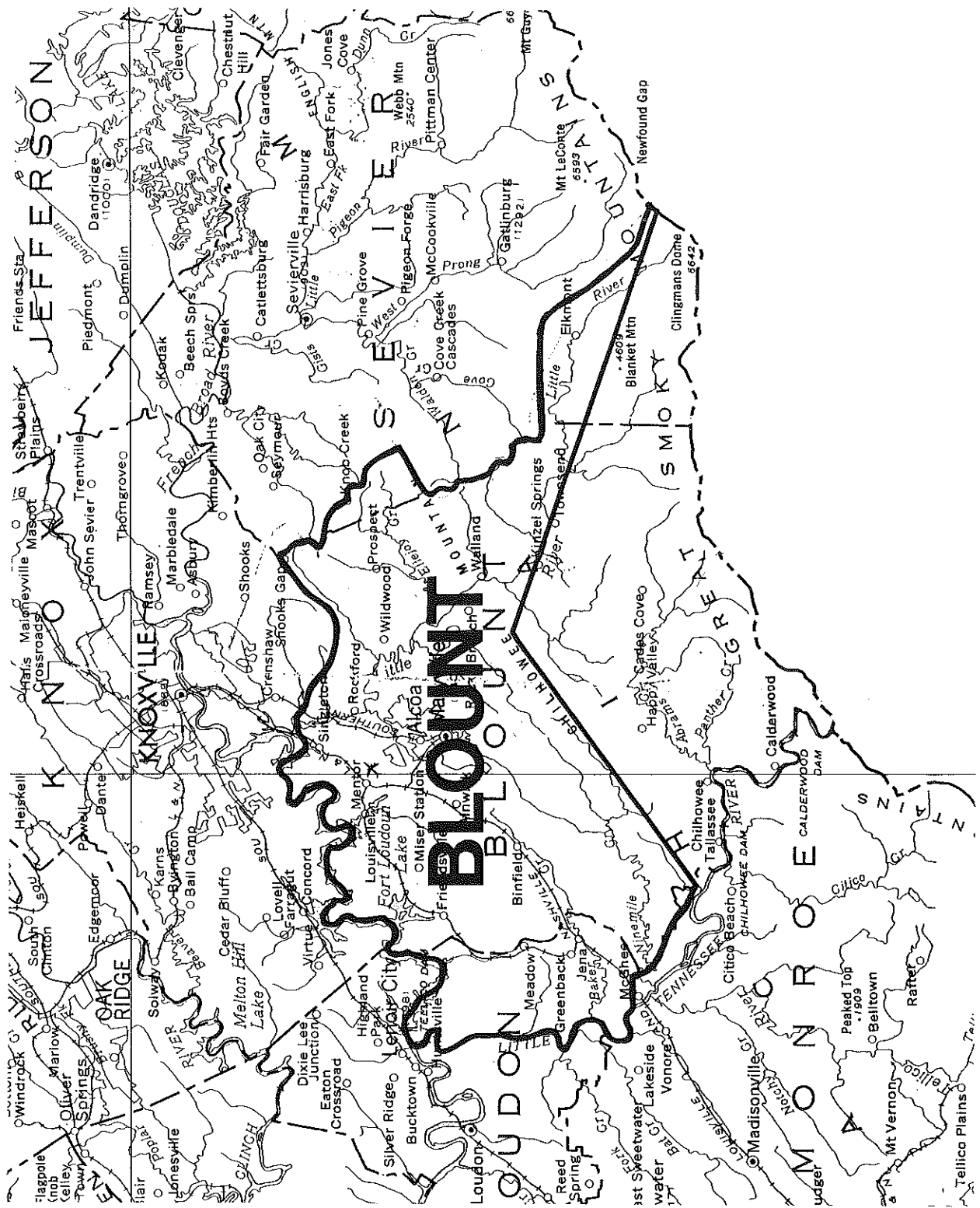


Figure 2. Blount County, 1798

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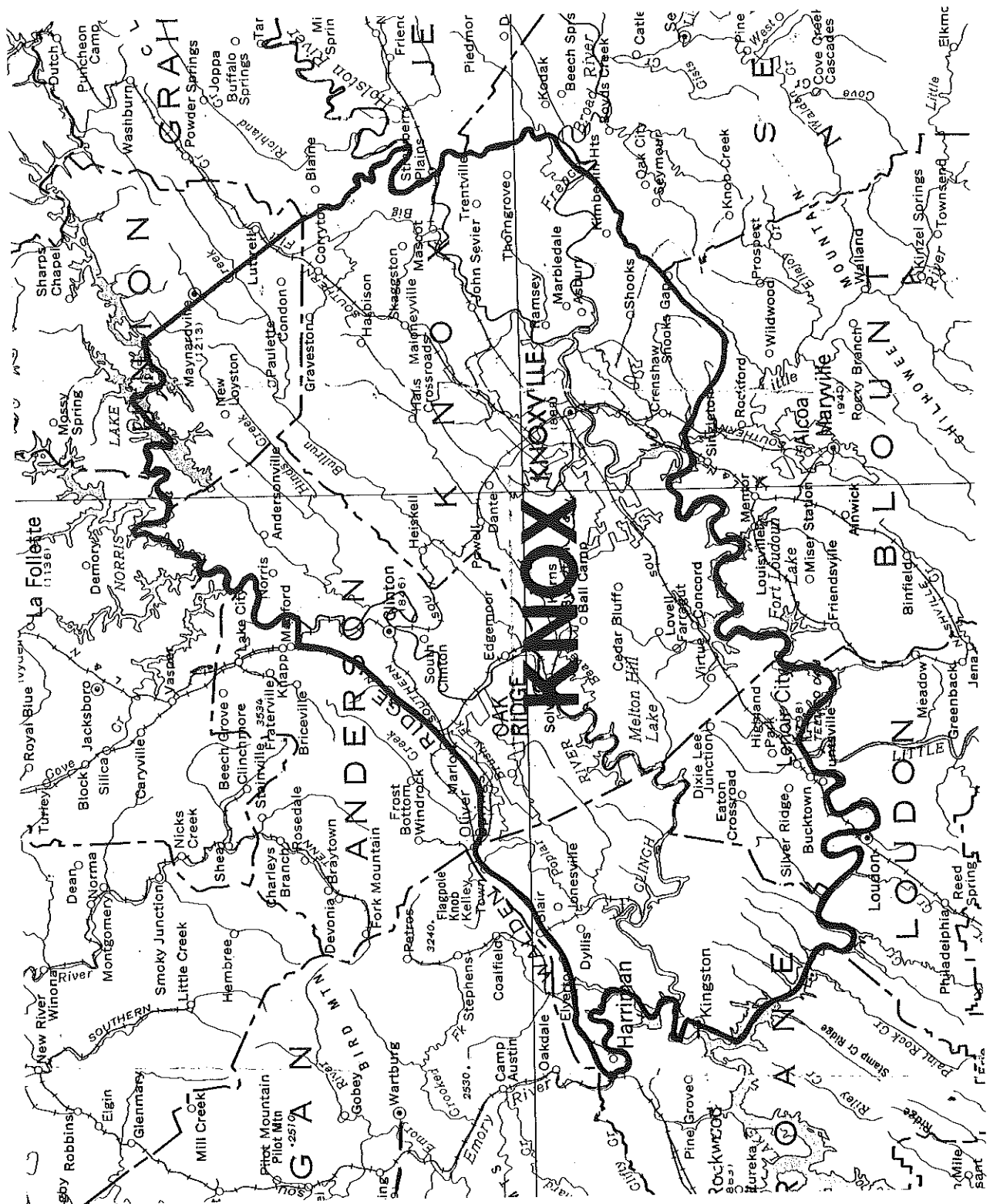


Figure 3. Knox County, 1799

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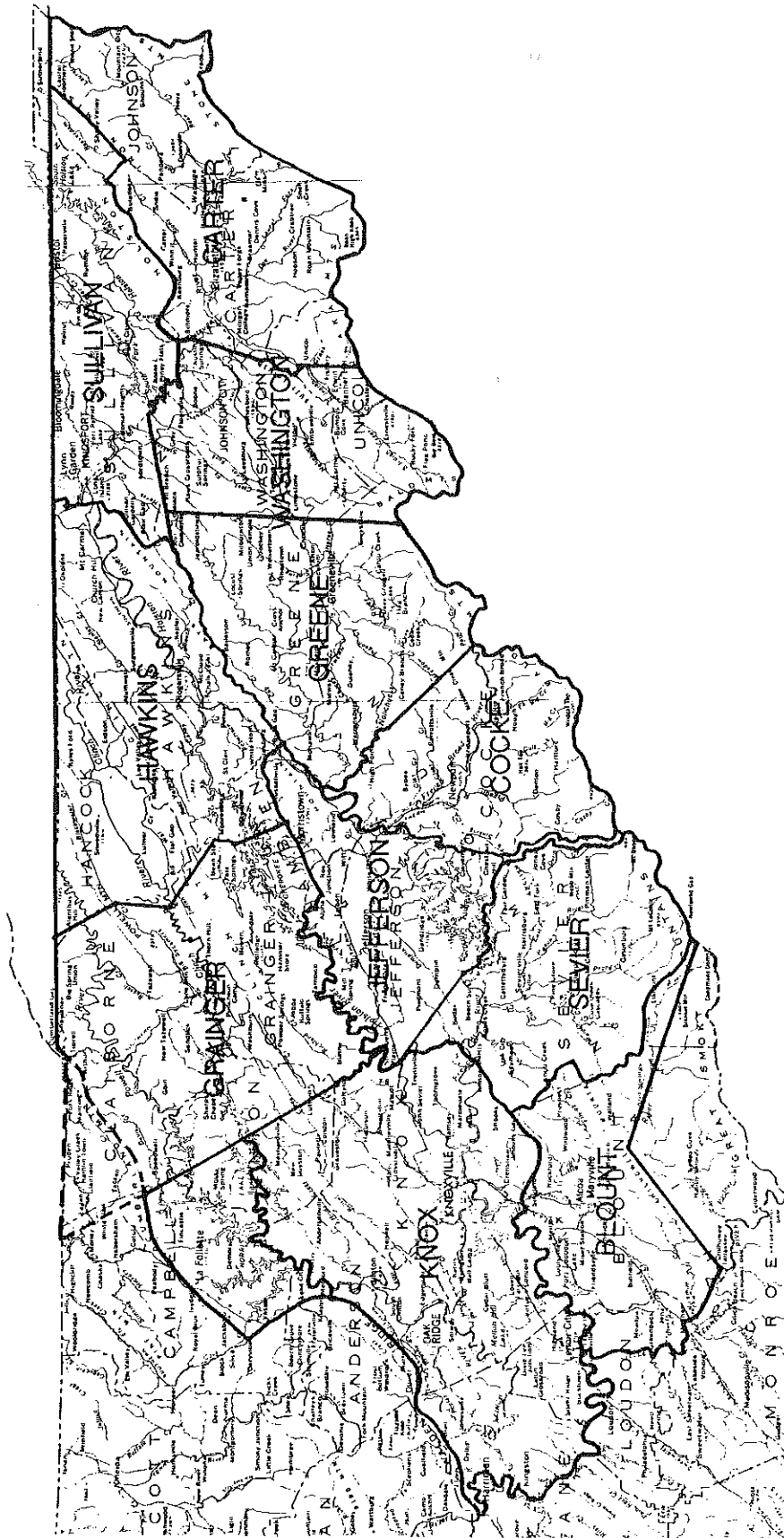


Figure 4. East Tennessee counties, 1799