

Historic Trails of the Pilot Ridge Country, Humboldt and Trinity Counties, California

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Introduction

This paper is part of a series of overviews documenting the prehistory and history of the southern region of what are today federal lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service as well as private lands that are in the immediate vicinity. This region includes the Mad River Ranger District and the extreme southern region of the Lower Trinity Ranger District, Six River National Forest.

This portion of the overview focuses on the historic trails of what I have termed "Pilot Ridge country" (Image 1, Map1). This still relatively remote region located directly to the west of the crest of South Fork Mountain in eastern Humboldt and western Trinity Counties is centered on the Pilot Creek watershed. The overview is based on historic maps, Forest Service administrative documents, interviews with life-time residents of the region and former Forest Service employees, and my over thirty years of working for Six Rivers National Forest conducting archaeological surveys and test excavations in the region.

With the exception of a narrow gravel road on Whiting and Last Chance Ridges and a few jeep roads, the region had remained relatively undeveloped and many of the trails still maintained a reasonable level of integrity until the mid 1980s. At that time, a paved road Forest Highway 1 (FH1 also known as 6N01), was constructed through Pilot Ridge country and timber harvesting activities began (see Keter 2011). It was during this period that I first hiked (and recorded) many of the trails in the region during archaeological surveys. Since that time I have continued to drive the roads and jeep trails and hike what remains of the old trails in Pilot Ridge country.

From an historical perspective the network of trails that lace the Pilot Ridge country is one of the most important tangible cultural features manifested at the landscape level. Documenting the location of the trail system is essential in order to provide a contextual framework within which to view both the prehistoric and historic land-use history and archaeological record of the region.

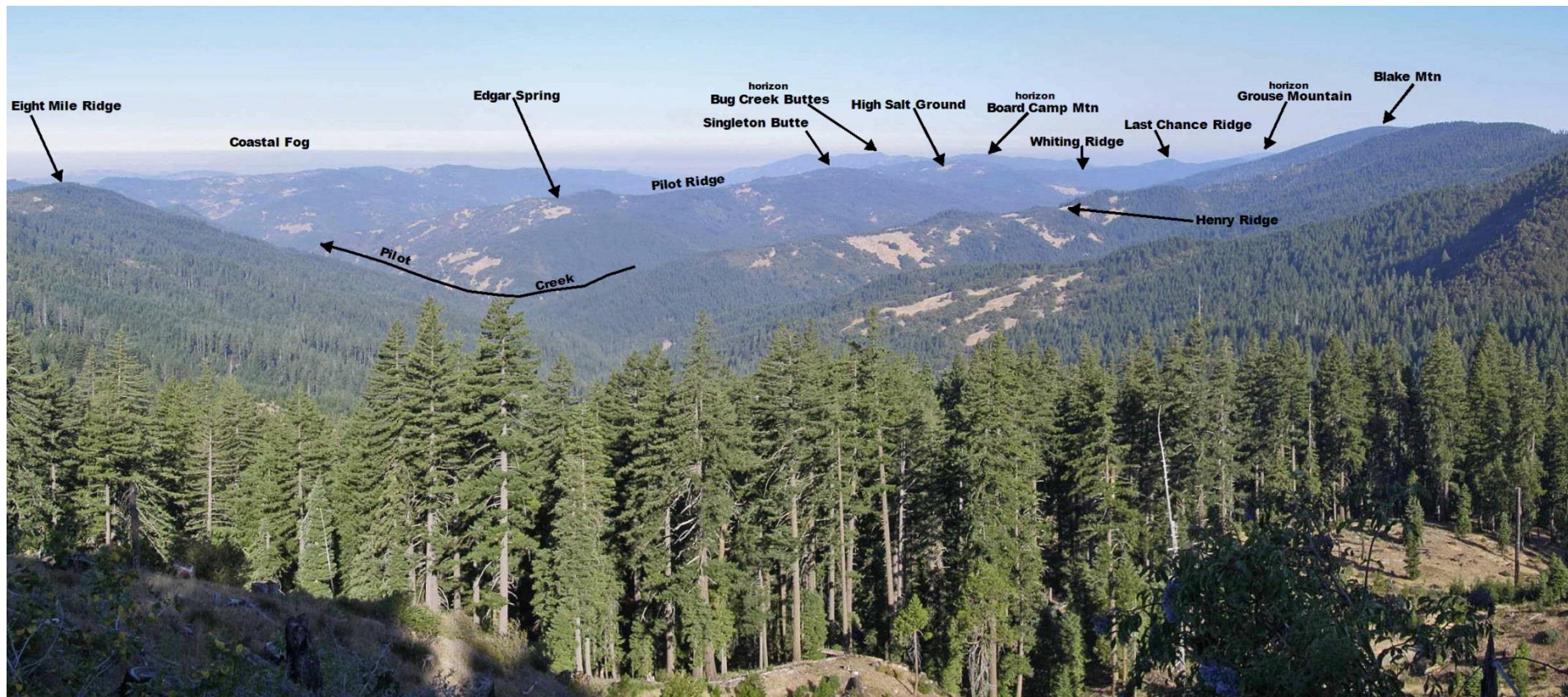
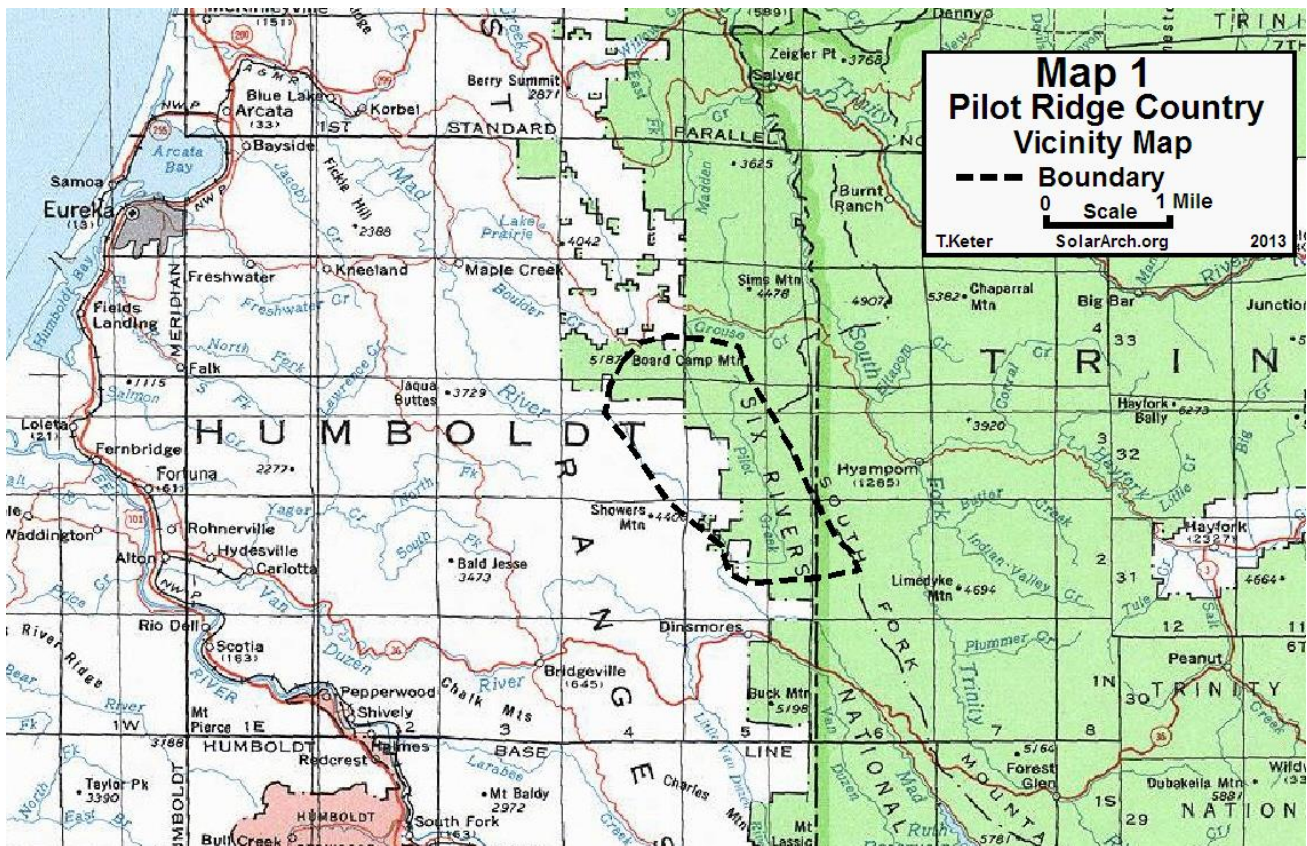


Image 1

View northwest near junction of Eight Mile Ridge and South Fork Mountain to the Pilot Creek Watershed
(Photo T. Keter 2008)



The First Trails

Long before Euro-Americans arrived Native Americans had already established a complex network of trails (travel corridors, pathways) throughout northwestern California. These trails had been used for centuries to connect villages with distant communities, to facilitate the hunting of game, and to provide access to areas where plant resources were collected. Trails were also used for access to religious and spiritual locations and for inter-tribal contacts--including trade, communication, and social interaction. During the prehistoric era trails provided much the same function to their users as modern roads and freeways provide societies today.

Many of the trails in Pilot Ridge country might better be described as "pathways" or "travel corridors" through the landscape. There may have been variants in the route of a trail with spur trails diverging and then reconnecting as they headed in the same general direction. For example, a spur trail might circle to a spring or area where there were potential subsistence resources available. On Henry Ridge (Image 1) the descending ridgeline is relatively narrow and paralleling strands or "braids" of a trail would not have been as common as the trail following the broad crest of South Fork Mountain that in

places is up to a hundred or more yards wide.

After 1850 many of the prehistoric trails were used by miners, merchants, and packers in the communities established along the north coast in order to reach the gold mining regions to the east. Later, ranchers used these trails to move their livestock to the summer ranges of the Bald Hills region. Today, many contemporary roads in northwestern California (from highways to jeep trails) generally follow these ancient routes.

Stephen Powers who authored a pioneering ethnography (*Tribes of California* 1877) on Native Americans in California while traveling through the Round Valley region of the North Coast Ranges in the early 1870s observed that:

Most people who have traveled in the frontier regions of California, especially if they were on foot, have probably been...exasperated at the perversity with which the road-makers have run the trails and roads over the summits of the hills. Often have I said to myself in my hot impatience, "If there is one hill in all this land that is higher than another, these engineers and graders are never content until they have carried the road over the top of it."

...When the whole face of the country is wooded alike, the old Indian trails will be found along the streams; but when it is some-what open they invariably run along the ridges, a roll or two below the crest—on the south side of it, if the ridge trends east and west; on the east side, if it trends north mid south. This is for the reason, as botanical readers will understand that the west or north side of a hill is most thickly wooded [snow also remains on the ground longer]. The California Indians seek open ground for their trails that they may not be surprised either by their enemies or by cougars and grizzly bear, of which beasts they entertain a lively terror (Powers 1976:119 [reprint]). [From the original.]

It is likely in the North Coast Ranges that prehistoric trails (often following game trails that predate human settlement) evolved through continued use and refinement rather than through purposeful construction. This fact is also true for many trails used during the early years of the historic era--especially those in more remote and less visited regions like Pilot Ridge country. [Refer to Appendix 1 for a formal definition and a discussion of trails as routes or "pathways" through the landscape.]

Background

Inland from the redwood belt of the northwestern California coastal region lies a narrow band of mountains--the Bald Hills--dominated by oak woodlands and open grassland prairies. This region stretches from about the Schoolhouse Peak region of Redwood National Park east of the town of Orick--south for over a hundred miles to about Round Valley in Mendocino County and includes the area that is the focus of this overview. This

region is not rich in minerals. Instead of the gold bearing granites of the Trinity Mountains region, the Bald Hills are composed of ancient river sediments deposited during the Cretaceous Period on the bed of an ancient ocean. Then, as the Pacific Plate continued to subduct and move to the east under the North American Plate, it lifted the ocean floor thousands of feet. For this reason, the mountains of the North Coast Ranges (dominated by sedimentary rocks and mélangé known as the Franciscan Formation) erode very easily.

This simple fact of orogeny combined with climate and other natural forces has helped to shape the rugged character of the land. For that reason, the location of trail routes through Pilot Ridge country has been greatly influenced by the region's deeply dissected side drainages and rugged topography. A fault line stretching along the foot of South Fork Mountain's western slope marks the divide between two geomorphic provinces. To the east are mixed conifer forests and the gold mining regions of the Klamath Mountain Geomorphic Province and to the west the oak woodlands and open grasslands that dominated the Bald Hills region of the Coast Range Geomorphic Province. The crest of South Fork Mountain (varying in elevation from about 5,000' to 6,000') stretches from the headwaters region of the South Fork of the Trinity River in the Yolla Bolly Mountains north to Last Chance Ridge and forms the watershed divide for over 40 miles between the South Fork Trinity River basin to the east and the Mad River basin to the west.

Because the Nongatl, whose territory encompassed the majority of Pilot Ridge country, are one of the least documented Native American groups in the entire state there are no references to trails in the ethnographic record for this region (Kroeber 1925, Baumhoff 1958). For that reason, a definitive conclusion as to whether a particular trail recorded for this study dates to the prehistoric era is not possible. Given the relatively dense population of Native Americans in northwest California (one of the highest in North America), the large number and location of prehistoric sites recorded in the region over the last three decades associated with trails, and based on several other factors including the character of the rugged topography and location of water sources (few and far between in the hot dry summers), it is likely the vast majority of the trails (pathways, travel corridors) discussed in this overview date to the prehistoric era.

The Gold Rush of 1849

In the spring and summer of 1849, hundreds of miners flooded the creek and river canyons of the Trinity Mountains of northern California in search of gold. Almost overnight Weaver (Weaverville) became a bustling town. Many of the men (there were very few women in the early gold rush towns), especially those who got in early when the placer gold was still rather easy to find, made substantial fortunes. During the early days of the gold rush any man willing to work hard could find at least some gold dust and even some nuggets if he was lucky. The result of all this mining activity was that it created substantial wealth and a ready market for nearly everything including food, clothing, and mining equipment (and another very important product--liquor). Supplies were shipped via pack trains to the

merchants in the mining regions. More often than not it was the merchant's capitalizing on the region's new-found wealth that "struck at rich."

The first miners to enter the gold fields of the Trinity Mountains region came from the east via the Sacramento Valley. Merchants, shipping companies, and others who stood to make substantial profits by supplying the miners with needed products recognized that establishing a port on the coast and bringing supplies overland to the Trinity mining region centered on Weaverville could compete profitably with the route from the Sacramento Valley. The trail to the mines from the Central Valley was rugged and difficult to travel and it was hoped that a coastal route would be both shorter and easier to traverse. To the west of Weaverville about 60 air miles (almost 100 miles by trail) was the Pacific Ocean. Also, a coastal port could supply the miners working in booming regions like Orleans Bar (Orleans), Sommes Bar, and Happy Camp along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers.

Late in the fall of 1849, Josiah Gregg led a party of miners west from Weaverville. Their goal was to reach the Pacific Ocean and locate a harbor in order to establish a shipping center and a trail linking the mines with the coast. Gregg's party left Weaverville in November of a year when winter storms were early and strong. After many difficulties (see Coy 1929:36-44), they reached the Pacific and eventually "discovered" Humboldt Bay. Although an American ship, the O'Cain, flying the Russian flag and captained by an American, Jonathan Winship, had entered and mapped Humboldt Bay in 1806, this fact remained unknown for over four decades buried in the Russian archives in St. Petersburg. The entrance to the bay was difficult to see from sailing ships because of the bluff located to the east of the inlet. Thus, for nearly half a century, until the Gregg Party reached the bay in late December of 1849, Humboldt Bay had remained "undiscovered" by ships sailing along the coast between San Francisco and ports in Oregon and Washington.

Traveling south from Humboldt Bay, through largely unexplored and unmapped country, the Gregg party eventually made it back to the settlements in the Bay Area, but not before the men faced extreme conditions including nearly continuous winter rains, starvation, confrontations and arguments among members of the group, and an attack by grizzly bears that left one man almost dead. Gregg did not survive the rigors of the trip and he died near Clear Lake. A member of the Party said that Gregg "fell from his horse and died in a few hours without speaking--he had no meat for several days, [and] had been living entirely upon acorns and herbs" (Coy 1929:43).

By the early spring of 1850, and nearly over night, three towns--Union City (Arcata), Bucksport (near the present site of Fort Humboldt), and Humboldt City (adjacent to the bluff across from the entrance to the bay)--sprang up on Humboldt Bay. Eureka was the last town to be incorporated in May of 1850. The towns were established primarily as ports and trails were quickly opened for the pack trains to carry supplies east to the mining regions.

Humboldt City was in an area prone to flooding and soon was nearly abandoned. Eureka

grew rapidly, and it eventually came to dominate and absorb Bucksport. The result was that by the summer of 1850 pack trains were crowding the newly blazed trails heading east from the booming port towns of Eureka and Union City to the Trinity Mines and Weaverville. The small harbor at Trinidad was also a booming port at this time with pack trains heading east via trails over the Bald Hills to the Klamath River and Salmon River mining regions.

The earliest trail to Weaverville from the coast was established in 1850. The Humboldt-Hyampom Trail connected Union City and Eureka on Humboldt Bay with Hyampom Valley and then continued on to Weaverville. The trail headed east from Blue Lake, crossed Redwood Creek a few miles below its headwaters, and ascended Grouse Mountain (5,410 feet in elevation) about three air miles to the north of Pilot Ridge. It then descended to the southeast via a southeast trending ridge (a jeep trail still follows much of the original route in this area, personal observation 2008) to Grouse Creek at a point just to the west of Mosquito Creek. Here it headed east along the north side of Grouse Creek past the future location of Wise Station at the mouth of Sims Creek. [Sims Creek is labeled as Wise Creek on most historic maps of the area and in the 1990s it was still referred to as such by locals.] After crossing the South Fork of the Trinity River (near the mouth of Grouse Creek) the trail continued on to Hyampom Valley and finally Weaverville. In the early days the trail was dangerous for travelers and there were several incidents of Indians ambushing pack trains (see Coy 1929:69-71 for a description of this route , Rowley MS). [Refer to the References Cited section for a tribute and a dedication of this overview to Max Rowley an avocational historian and life-long resident of this region.]

Historic Exploration of Pilot Ridge Country

It is not known exactly when Euro-Americans first entered Pilot Ridge country. Although it is possible that sometime before 1850 a few trappers may have passed through leaving no evidence or lasting impression, it is more likely as a result of its remoteness that the first Euro-Americans to enter the region was subsequent to the Gold Rush of 1849. Given the fact that "gold fever" was sweeping the state and nation, there was little motivation for the exploration or development of Pilot Ridge country during the boom times of the gold rush era. Moreover, in the 1850s, the danger of conflict with the Indians desperately fighting to defend their ancestral territory made travel through the region dangerous and settlement impossible throughout much of the Bald Hills region including Pilot Ridge country (Keter 1994).

The first documented entry by Euro-Americans into Pilot Ridge country was related to exploration and the establishment of a trail in order to connect the coastal towns of the lower Eel River and Van Duzen River valleys with the Trinity Mines. Many of these early historic trails leading inland from the coastal regions of Humboldt County were later used by the ranchers as "trailways" for the movement of livestock to their summer range in the Bald Hills. For decades, beginning in the 1860s many of the springs (for example Mud

Spring, Whiting Spring, Pistol Spring, Skull Camp Spring) in the South Fork Mountain, Last Chance Ridge, Whiting Ridge, and Pilot Ridge region were the locations of seasonal sheepherder camps and during the homesteading era of the early twentieth century settlers in Pilot Ridge country used many of these trails to access their homesteads. After creation of the Trinity National Forest in April of 1905, many of these established trails were maintained and in some cases new trails were constructed by the Forest Service for administrative purposes. Also, throughout much of the historic era the public has used the historic trails of this region for hunting, fishing, and other recreational purposes and that use continues to this day. [Some trails--for example, sections of the Dan East Trail (FS Trail # 5E14, Map 5) are now Forest Service approved two-wheeled OHV routes.]

In 1856, due to the booming trade with the Trinity mines, Humboldt County merchants proposed construction of a wagon road linking Humboldt Bay with Weaverville (Coy 1929:71). The proposed route led east from Arcata to the headwaters region of Redwood Creek near Board Camp Mountain. Here, the proposed route headed southeasterly down the crest of Pilot Ridge and circled around the head of the Pilot Creek watershed on Whiting Ridge and Last Chance Ridge. The road was never built but portions of this route were developed and utilized as a pack trail connecting the Humboldt Bay region with Hyampom (See the Pilot Ridge Trail and Last Chance Ridge Trail sections below).

Except for a few private logging roads punched into the Pilot Creek drainage via Maple Creek to log some of private parcels in the 1960s and 1970s most of the region remained roadless with trails still providing the only access to most of the Pilot Ridge country. In the mid 1980s the Forest Service constructed FH1 a major haul route along the crest of Pilot, Whiting, Last Chance Ridges, and the northern portion of South Fork Mountain (approximately 12 miles from Last Chance Ridge to about Eight Mile Ridge) and began timber harvest activities in the region. As a result, many of the original trails were destroyed or overlain by the newly constructed timber access roads that followed the same topographically logical routes as the historic trails--primarily along trending ridgelines.

Trails of the Pilot Ridge Country

The following section summarizes and plots on respective USGS 7.5' maps all of the trails that have been identified and recorded to date or were identified on historic maps for Pilot Ridge country on Forest Service administered lands and adjoining private lands (see also Keter 1997). The majority of trails included in this overview have been recorded within or adjacent to the Pilot Creek watershed (Map 2). The region to the west of Pilot Ridge that drops to the Mad River extends beyond the National Forest Boundary and consists, today, of lands owned for the most part by the Simpson Timber Company (Map 7). I have plotted these trails based on historical and topographical maps of the area and where possible my rather limited knowledge of the area.

[Refer to Appendix 1 for a discussion of the methodology used for plotting trail routes on

maps and for a listing of all USGS maps, Forest Service maps, historical maps, and other sources used in plotting the trails. Appendix 2 contains many of the historic maps used to plot the trails for this overview.]

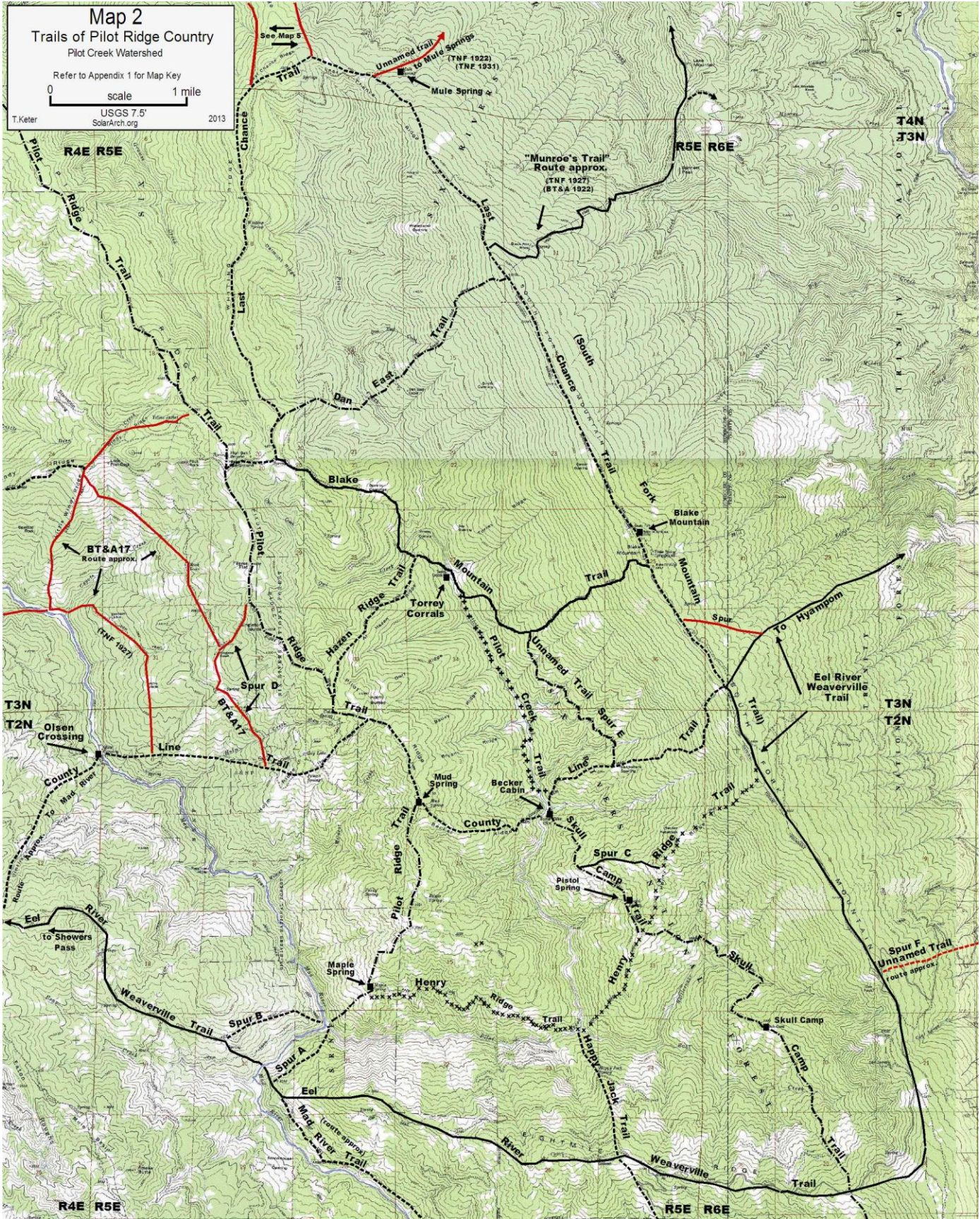
In the early 20th century, during the brief florescence of settlement and homesteading activity in Pilot Ridge country referred in this overview as the "homesteading era" there were a number of trails used to connect the various homesteads with the network of major trails . Many of these trails were ephemeral in nature and have disappeared over the last century along with almost any signs that this remote region during the first few decades of the twentieth century was once the location of at least a dozen homesteads (Keter 2010: Tables 1-2).

Map 2
Trails of Pilot Ridge Country
 Pilot Creek Watershed

Refer to Appendix 1 for Map Key

0 scale 1 mile

T. Keter USGS 7.5' SolarArch.org 2013



Historic Trails:

Pilot Creek Watershed: South Region (Refer to Map 3)

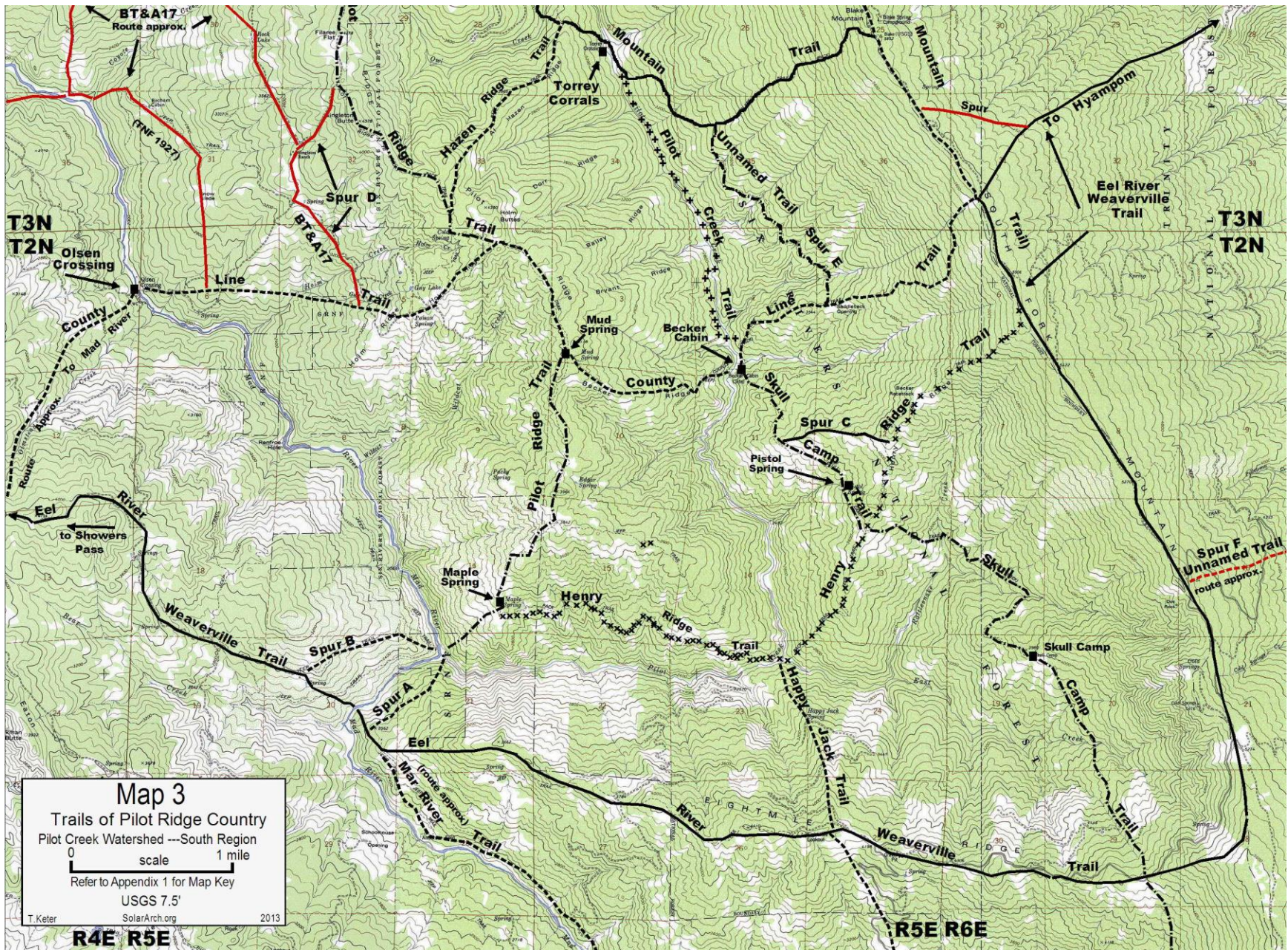
The Eel River-Weaverville Trail

The first recorded exploration of Pilot Ridge country was a result of the desire to establish a transportation link between Humboldt County communities centered on the lower Eel River and Van Duzen River valleys and the gold mining centers in Trinity County. The five Cooper brothers settled in the lower Yeager Creek valley just to the east of Hydesville where they built a sawmill, gristmill, and ran a ranch. In order to sell their products (including flour, butter, and pork) in great demand by miners, in 1852 they blazed a trail leading to Hyampom where it connected with the heavily traveled Humboldt-Hyampom Trail as it headed east towards Cox Bar and Weaverville (*Humboldt Historian* Jan-Feb 1980:4).

The Eel River-Weaverville Trail, blazed by the Cooper brothers, headed east up the Van Duzen drainage from Hydesville crossing over Shower's Pass (the Van Duzen River-Mad River divide) before dropping down and crossing the Mad River about one mile above (south) the mouth of Pilot Creek at the foot of Eight Mile Ridge. The 1872 Government Land Office (GLO) survey map indicates that the trail then continued east ascending Eight Mile Ridge to the crest of South Fork Mountain and headed north along the crest about five miles before it dropped down to the South Fork Trinity River on the descending ridgeline immediately to the south of Kurlin Creek where the trail crossed the river to Hyampom Valley.

The section of the Eel River-Weaverville Trail that ascended Eight Mile Ridge is labeled the "Hayfork Yager" trail on some GLO Maps (Six Rivers National Forest, Lands Records). On one GLO (1872 see Appendix 2 Map 1), the Eel River-Weaverville Trail is labeled as the "Indian Valley Yager Trail." Indian Valley was the name early settlers and packers used to refer to what is now known as Hyampom Valley (personal communication Max Rowley, see also Lowden Maps). A third GLO map dated 1880 labels the trail on Eight Mile Ridge as the "Trail From Hay Fork to Humboldt Bay" (Map 4).

After the County Line Trail was surveyed and opened it provided a more direct and easier route to Hyampom, bypassing to the north the old section of trail that ascended Eight Mile Ridge to the crest of South Fork Mountain. This abandoned section of trail also became known as the Eight Mile Ridge Trail. Near the foot of Eight Mile Ridge a trail headed south from the Eel River- Weaverville trail paralleling the Mad River. The historic name for this trail is unknown at this time, given its location paralleling the Mad River south for over 30 miles to the Three Forks region in the upper Mad River watershed, it is labeled as the Mad River Trail on Maps 2-3. It was also probably one of the earliest historic trails in the region providing access from Three Forks to the Yolla Bolly country and even to the Sacramento Valley by way of the Yolla Bolly Mountains (Keter 1997).

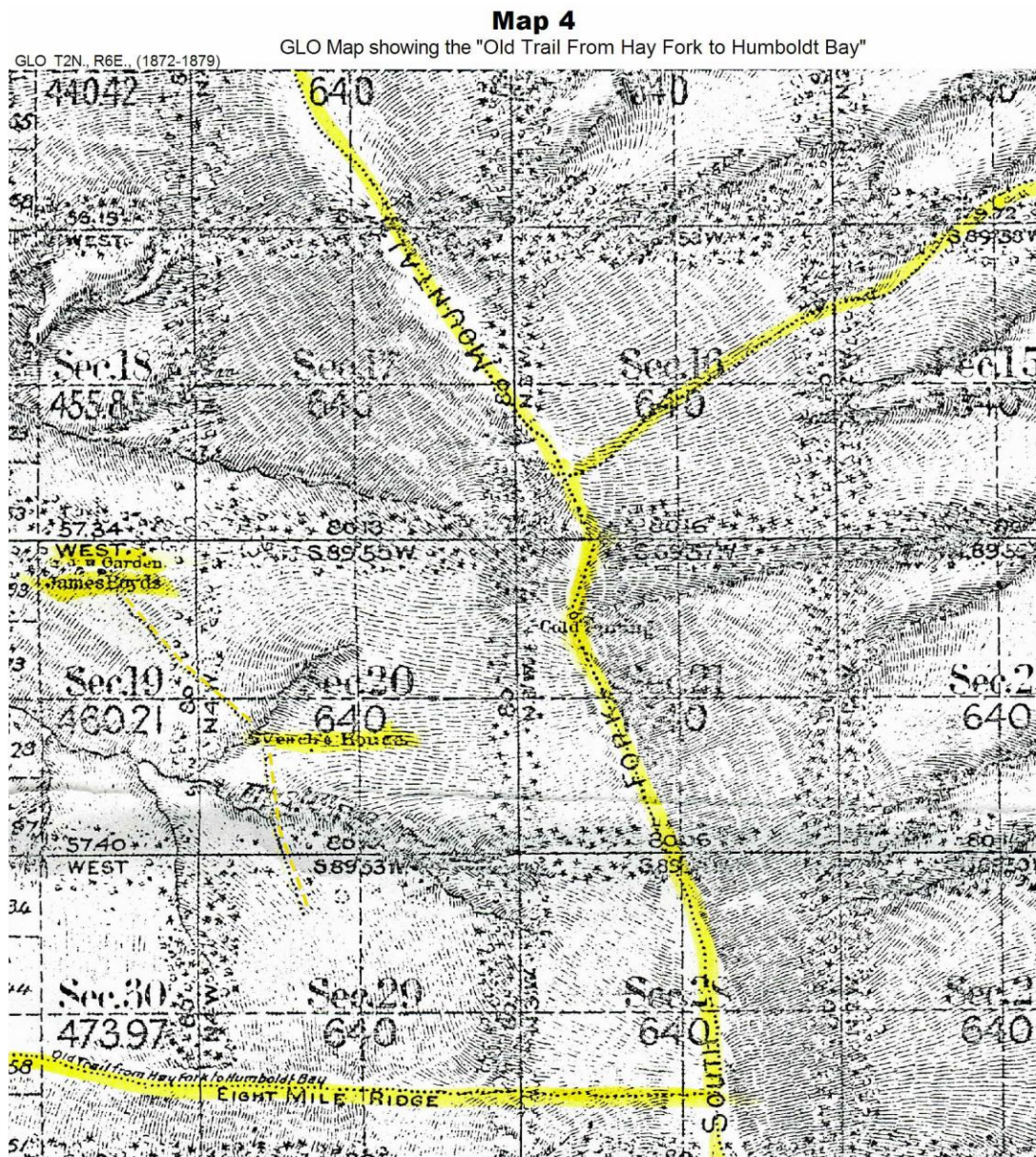


Map 3
 Trails of Pilot Ridge Country
 Pilot Creek Watershed ---South Region
 0 1 mile
 scale
 Refer to Appendix 1 for Map Key
 USGS 7.5'
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Max Rowley indicated that this trail was first pioneered in the early 1850s by Joseph Russ, Barry Adams, and Slaughter Robinson to drive cattle into Humboldt County from the Sacramento Valley (see Keter 1997 for a discussion of this route).

Spur F

The 1880 GLO map and several other maps (Belcher T&A 1922:17) show an unnamed trail (Map 4) heading to the northeast from the Eel River-Weaverville Trail as it follows the crest of South Fork Mountain just to the north of Cold Springs. This unnamed trail (Section 16, Map 4) appears to have been constructed as an alternative route to Hyampom from the Eight Mile Ridge and Cold Spring area.



County Line Trail

Within a few years of its construction, a portion of the Eel River-Weaverville Trail lying to the east of Showers Pass was rerouted in the region passing through Pilot Ridge country. This new section of the Eel River-Weaverville Trail was completed in 1856 (*Humboldt Times*, August 2, 1856). For the next several decades it became the main travel route to the mines in Trinity County from Hydesville and the lower Eel River valley region. Although the rerouted trail retained the name--Eel River-Weaverville Trail, the new section of trail also became known as the County Line Trail (Forest Service Maps, USGS Maps) and is referred to as such in this report.

The Eureka newspaper, the *Humboldt Times* (August 2, 1856), reported on the first pack train to carry supplies from the coast to the mines in Trinity County over the new section of trail and in the next weekly edition, the *Times* (August 9, 1856) provided a first-hand account of a Mr. Howland traveling the new section of trail. Howland wrote:

Leaving Shower's Pass, I took the new trail, surveyed by E. Davis Esq., bearing *to the left of the old trail* [emphasis added]....

The whole distance is about 80 miles and I should think a pack train might make the trip easily in about five days. The distance by the old trails varies little from this, but they are not so pleasant, and have not the facilities to be found on the new one.

After the existing trail crossed over Showers Pass, the new section of trail forked to the north of the old trail and continued down slope northeast to the Mad River. This is the trail junction that found Howland "bearing to the left" (1872 GLO map, Belcher Title and Abstract 1922 Map14) and dropping down to the Mad River about three miles to the north of Pilot Creek at what became known as Olmstead Crossing and later Olsen Crossing. The trail then headed east and climbed Holm Ridge to the crest of Pilot Ridge at a point about one mile to the north of Mud Spring. Here, the trail headed south to Mud Spring (this portion of the trail along the crest of Pilot Ridge has also at various times been referred as the Last Chance Trail and Pilot Ridge Trail see below). At Mud Spring the trail headed east following Becker Ridge as it descended to Pilot Creek crossing at the future location of Fred Becker's cabin, a homesteader who lived here in the 1920s (see Keter 2011: Table 2). It then ascended to the crest of South Fork Mountain where it reconnected with the original Eel River-Weaverville Trail at about the point where it turned east and began to descend down the trending ridge south of Kurlin Creek to the South Fork of the Trinity River.

During the late 1850s travel on this trail was dangerous and sometimes led to the loss not only of the pack animals and the supplies they carried but the death of packers as well. For example, in July of 1862 four men, including William Olmstead, were attacked by Indians. One man was killed and Olmstead was wounded. This incident accounts for how the river

crossing got its name (although as noted earlier it is now known as Olsen Crossing it is located adjacent to the mouth of Olmstead Creek and was referred to by many locals as Olmstead Crossing). In September of the same year there was another Indian attack along the trail at the same location on three men driving hogs to the mines in Trinity County. All three men were killed in the attack (Bledsoe 1885:221-222).

Max Rowley: Crossing Over South Fork Mountain in Winter on the County Line Trail

The County Line trail crossed South Fork Mountain at nearly 6,000' in elevation and it was often impassable due to deep snows from as early as late October or early November into late May or early June most years. This made packing supplies to the Trinity mines during the winter impossible using the section of the County Line Trail crossing over South Fork Mountain. Max Rowley, a local historian who worked for the Forest Service for about thirty years not only hiked many of the trails in Pilot Ridge country but also interviewed a number of individuals who lived in the region during the brief florescence of the homesteading era between about 1910 and the mid-to late 1930s. He published an article in the local Eureka paper the *Eureka Times Standard*, in Andrew Genzoli's column "Redwood Country", July 7, 1976, on what happened when a pack train taking the County Line Trail in early February of 1856 attempted to cross over South Fork Mountain.

...In early February 1856, we find George Bramlett in Weaverville, the owner of 30 head of pack animals and several expert packers in his hire. The weather was beautiful, warm, clear sunny skies--a touch of spring was about. To experienced mountaineers like Bramlett, he pondered if this might be the anticipated February "weather break." This stretch of good weather in the Pacific Northwest can last up to three weeks then suddenly return to the normal weather pattern. If this were the "winter break," Bramlett contemplated on making a dash to the coast with his pack train.

Mules laden with choice food supplies would bring high prices with the miners, especially in the winter months when packing came to a virtual standstill. Bramlett decided that butter, eggs, and buckwheat flour all items in high demand at the mining camps would make up his cargo on the return trip to the Trinity River.

...Bramlett's outfit plodded into Hyampom Valley via North Fork, Cox Bar, Corral Bottom, and Eltapom Creek. In Hyampom he was elated to hear the high pass over the South Fork Range was open. Travelers reported deep snow, melting under sunny weather. Late the next day the snow pass over Blake Mountain in the South Fork Range was conquered. Traveling had been very difficult for the mules.

Night fell and camp was made on Pilot Creek at a site today called Becker's Cabin [Map 2] on the western slope of the massive mountain. Deep snow was now behind them, but there were other worries. The talk in camp that night centered around crossing the Mad River and hostile Indians known to be active in the vicinity of Showers Pass, and the headwaters of Yeager Creek down to the confluence of the Van Duzen River near Hydesville.

Noon the next day the Mad River was forded without incident--no Indians were seen--everything was going better than anticipated. Two days later Bramlett's train arrived on Main Street in Rohnerville in good shape. Townsfolk could hardly believe a large pack train had arrived from Weaverville over the Eel River-Weaverville Trail in February. They shook their heads in dismay over the daring and boldness of Bramlett and his men.

After loading up half the mules with flour and butter from the ranches of the lower Eel River Valley, Bramlett loaded the other half of the mules with flour from the mill run by the Cooper Brothers. He knew that the window of good weather would end soon so they wasted little time loading the mules and then headed east. They forded the Mad River at Olsen Crossing as a storm was approaching and began to ascend the County Line/Eel River-Weaverville Trail to the crest of South Fork Mountain. It was at that time as Rowley continues:

Darkness overtook the party when it had almost reached the top of South Fork Mountain at the steep 6,000 foot level. They had reached the snow line some distance back which made the going rough. It was decided to rest the mules, camp for the night and break through the belly-deep snow in the morning. The animals were unloaded and a snug camp made.

Around midnight Bramlett and his men were awakened by heavy snow fall. The men were dazed and speechless, they could not comprehend how the storm had moved in so quietly and quickly upon them.

By day-break a foot of new snow had fallen--in addition to that already on the ground making it impossible to reach the summit. Several hours were spent trying to conquer the last one-half mile in a blizzard. The mules became exhausted, gave up and stood motionless with their flanks pointed to the storm.

A decision was made--the loads were unpacked quickly and stashed in the timber alongside the trail...When the storm ceased, they would return to repack the mules and finish their journey to Hyampom and the Trinity. The mules were then turned around and headed down hill. To lose elevation rapidly was of utmost importance or they would all freeze to death from the cold and wet.

Reaching Mad River the snow had turned to rain. in the that short time the river had become a raging torrent and to cross and return to Rohnerville was impossible. A succession of heavy storms hit the area and soon they became prisoners trapped between the Mad River and South Fork Mountain. The party's food supply was soon exhausted and they had nothing to eat except for what they could hunt and kill which was very little....Twenty-two days later the storm abated and the water level dropped enough to allow the train to make a safe crossing of Mad River.

Early in March, Bramlett's train struggled back into Cooper's Mill empty of cargo. The men were weary and the pack animals were gaunt. All was lost, many dollars had been spent in buying goods never to be recovered. A month later Bramlett's train left Union by way of the [Humboldt] Hyampom Trail for the Trinity River. The train was loaded down with provisions for the miners.

Henry Ridge Trail

The Henry Ridge Trail was used extensively in the early 20th century by local homesteaders (consultants M. Stapp and I. Stapp). This trail followed Henry Ridge as it descends to the southwest from the crest of South Fork Mountain (Image 1). After crossing the Skull Camp Trail about 600 yards to the south of Pistol Spring, it connected with the Happy Jack Trail coming in from the south near the confluence of Pilot Creek and Rattlesnake Creek. Here, the trail continued to the west paralleling Pilot Creek to the north connecting with the Pilot Ridge Trail at Maple Spring.

It is not clear if the section of the trail from the mouth of Rattlesnake Creek to the Pilot Ridge Trail at Maple Spring was considered part of the Henry Ridge Trail as no specific documentation could be found. However, given its direct access from the Pilot Ridge Trail to Henry Ridge and the Becker Racetrack, it is included here as part of the Henry Ridge Trail. Part way up the ridge in Section 12 (T2N., R5E.) is a large flat labeled Becker Racetrack on USGS maps. It was here during the early 1900s homesteading era that Fred Becker who raised horses on his homestead and other local homesteaders often gathered for a favorite local social activity--horse racing (consultants M. Stapp and I. Stapp).

Max Rowley indicated that this trail was named after Henry Allen a rancher from Hyampom who used this trail for his livestock in order to access the oak woodlands and grasslands found on Henry Ridge. No specific information related to when this trail was established could be located. Given its strategic location, however, is it likely to date to the prehistoric era and there are a number of prehistoric sites scattered down Henry Ridge. Much of the route of this trail from South Fork Mountain was used as a jeep trail to access the Racetrack and lower Henry Ridge area. This section was destroyed by construction of a fire line during the Blake Fire in 1989. A jeep trail still generally follows the route of the original trail on lower portions of the ridge.

Unnamed Trail Spur C

An unnamed section of trail (Spur C) connected the Henry Ridge Trail to the Skull Camp Trail to provide a shortcut for those heading to the north towards the County Line Trail.

Happy Jack Trail

No historic information could be found on this trail. Its northern terminus was at its junction with the Henry Ridge Trail at the confluence of Rattlesnake and Pilot Creeks. The trail heads south to Happy Jack Spring then crossed over Eight Mile Ridge and dropped down into Mad River Country. Individuals whose parents homesteaded just to the east of Pilot Ridge during the early 1920s indicated that there was a settler in this vicinity (quite likely at Happy Jack Springs) who was known as Happy Jack (consultants: M. Stapp and I. Stapp).

Pilot Creek Trail (See also Maps 5 and 7)

Just to the north of the Becker Cabin the Pilot Creek Trail from its junction with the County Line Trail parallels Pilot Creek northwesterly crossing it a number of times before connecting with the Blake Mountain Trail. This section of trail was originally recorded as part of the Skull Camp Trail (site record 05-10-54-169) . Interview data, however, indicates that this was incorrect (consultants M. Stapp and I. Stapp). The trail is labeled as the "Pilot Creek Trail" on the 15' USGS map (Pilot Ridge USGS 1951).

About half of this trail was destroyed by the 1964 flood as a result of timber harvest activities in the late 1950s and early 1960s on several private property parcels in the area (over a period of several decades many of the old homestead parcels had been purchased by a logging company). [See Keter 2011 for a complete discussion of this topic.]

Pilot Ridge Trail

The Pilot Ridge Trail traversed the crest of Pilot Ridge south from its northern end at Kinsey Ridge (Map 7) to the mouth of Pilot Creek a distance of about fourteen air miles. The trail was among the earliest to be used during the historic era and it most certainly dates to the prehistoric era as dozens of prehistoric sites have been recorded. During the mid 1980s, over a three year period, eight prehistoric sites were excavated along the crest of Pilot Ridge. During the excavation of one site on Pilot Ridge, in the vicinity of High Salt Ground and Pilot Rock, a house floor with three possible post holes was uncovered. A sample from the site produced a radiocarbon date of nearly 6,000 years B.P. This is the oldest house floor excavated to date in northwestern California (Fitzgerald and Hildebrandt 2002).

The Pilot Ridge Trail appears on many of the earliest historic maps of the region. On the 1872 GLO map, Pilot Ridge is labeled as "Pilot Creek Ridge." Some maps (USGS 15' Pilot Creek, 1951, Six Rivers National Forest, 1947) show the Pilot Ridge Trail as traversing the entire length of Pilot Ridge from Kinsey Ridge in the north (Map 7), south to the mouth of Pilot Creek. Other maps label that section of trail extending north from Mud Spring to High Salt Ground (Map 3) as being part of the Last Chance Trail (see below). Just to complicate things a bit more, the short section of trail along the crest of Pilot Ridge south from Holm Ridge for about one mile to Mud Spring is labeled as the County Line Trail on some maps.

Prior to construction of FH1 by the Forest Service in the mid-1980s, a primitive four-wheel drive trail generally followed the blazed route of the original pack trail from Kinsey Ridge south along the crest of Pilot Ridge to a point about one mile south of High Salt Ground (Map 3). From that point, just to the south of Filaree Flat, the original trail continued south along the crest of Pilot Ridge to Holm Ridge while a primitive jeep trail (spur D originally a trail) headed southwesterly to Holm Ridge. From there the jeep trail followed the old County Line Trail east climbing to the crest of Pilot Ridge reconnecting with the Pilot Ridge Trail coming in from the north. A very narrow and rough jeep trail then followed the old blazed trail south to Mud Spring and then continued down the ridge a short distance before dead-ending. At that point the route again become a foot trail dropping down to Maple Spring and the mouth of Pilot Creek. The Pilot Ridge Trail was determined eligible for the National Register as part of the Pilot Ridge Archaeological/Historical District (for a discussion of the Pilot Ridge Trail North of High Salt Ground see the next section).



Image 2
Surviving Section of the Pilot Ridge Trail about two miles south of High Salt Ground
(Photo by T. Keter 1997)



Image 3

Surviving section Pilot Ridge Trail 1997

Note "dotted i" blaze on the Douglas fir. Blaze is probably under 50 years old
(Photo by T. Keter 1997)

Two Unnamed Trails Spur A and Spur B

Two unnamed spur trails at the mouth of Pilot Creek connected the Pilot Ridge Trail to the south with the old abandoned section of the Eel River-Weaverville Trail. It is not known when these two sections of trail were constructed. These trails show up on a number of historic maps (see Appendix 2: Six Rivers 1947, Trinity National Forest Maps, BT&A 1922 Map 16).

Unnamed Trail Spur A

This trail headed to the northeast from near the foot of Eight Mile Ridge above the Mad River. This spur trail connected the original section of the Eel River-Weaverville Trail/Eight Mile Ridge Trail north to the Pilot Ridge Trail at the mouth of Pilot Creek. The Pilot Ridge Trail then followed the trending ridge northeast up the divide between Pilot Creek and the Mad River to Mud Spring. Thus, the trail could be used as an alternate route to connect from the old section of the Eel River Hyampom Trail at Eight

Mile Ridge with the County Line Trail at Mud Spring. Unnamed Trail Spur B

The earliest Forest Service maps consulted for this study also show an unnamed trail, Spur B, dropping down to the northeast from the old abandoned section of the Eel River-Weaverville Trail about one-half mile to the west of the Mad River. This spur crossed the Mad River just to the north of the mouth of Pilot Creek. At this point it connected with the Pilot Ridge Trail (at about its junction with Spur A) as it ascended the ridge to Mud Spring.

Skull Camp Trail

This is one of the older historic trails documented for the region and a portion of the trail shows up on the 1872 GLO map (refer to Map 4 Sections 21 and 28, see also Appendix 1 for a discussion of the accuracy of nineteenth century cadastral surveys for this area). The trail may have connected with a homesteader or "squatters" cabin (someone simply living on public domain lands with no legal authority, a not uncommon practice at that time) claiming Skull Camp Spring and the surrounding area (Map 4: Section 20.)

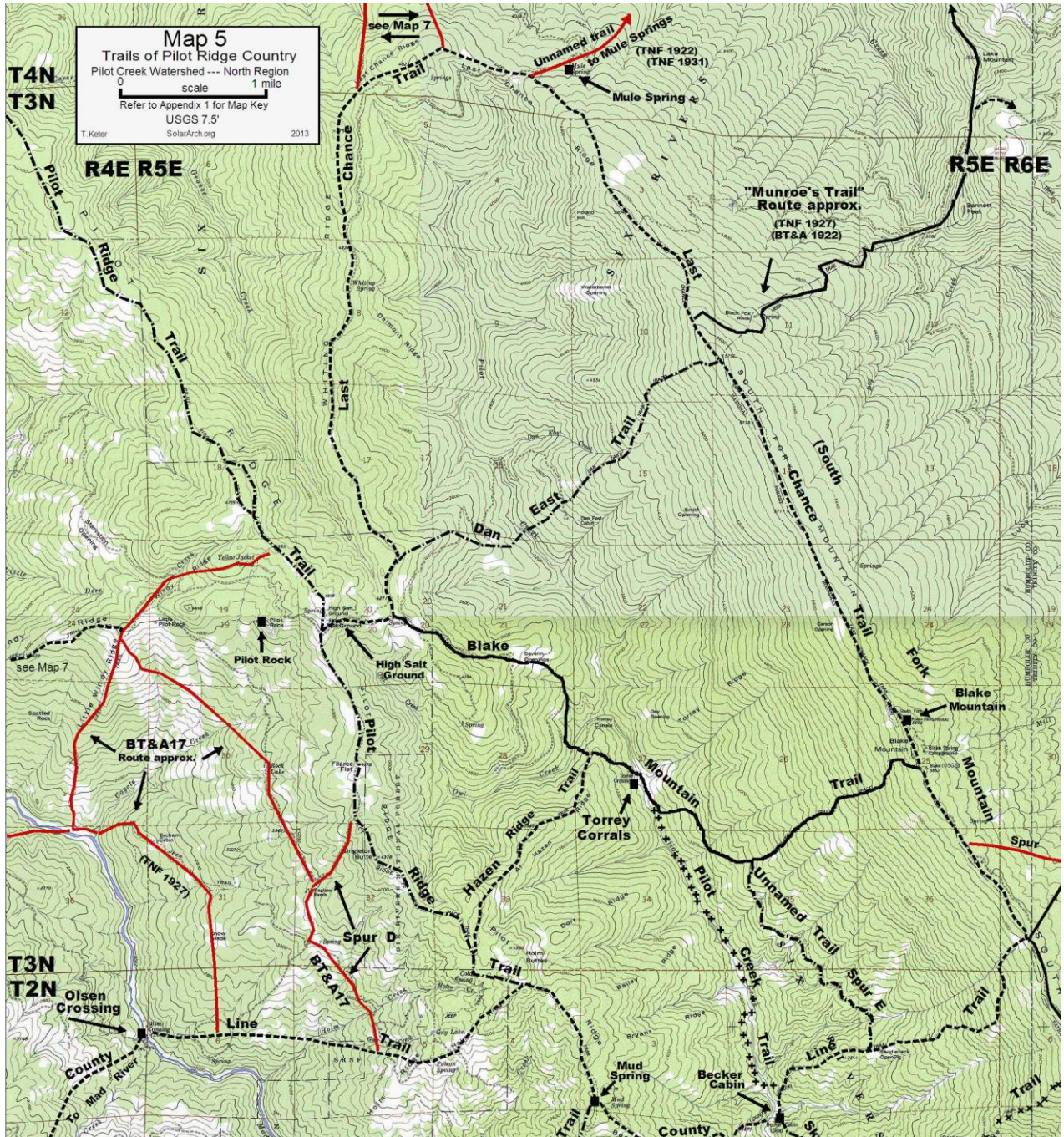
The Skull Camp Trail begins on the east bank of the Mad River to the south in Mad River country climbing the south facing slopes of Eight Mile Ridge crossing over the crest at about 4,500' in elevation about a half mile to the west of the crest of South Fork Mountain. Here, the trail continued north dropping down the north facing slope of Eight Mile Ridge into the Pilot Creek watershed to Skull Camp Spring. The trail continued north to the crest of Henry Ridge where it met the Henry Ridge Trail about one mile below Becker Race Track. The Skull Camp Trail continued north to Becker Cabin where it met the County Line Trail. Max Rowley indicated that Skull Camp got its name in the early 1860s during the "Indian wars" when ranchers found the skulls of a number of individuals who had been killed--quite likely, given the ongoing conflict at the time, those of Native Americans (Bledsoe 1885, Keter 1990).

The northern section of this trail from Henry Ridge to Becker's Cabin was also known by some locals as the Pistol Springs Trail (consultant M, Rowley). Today the section of the trail extending from Henry Ridge south to about the upper reaches of the East fork of Rattlesnake Creek is used as a two wheeled OHV trail.

Unnamed Trail Spur E

This blazed trail was recorded but no information could be found relating to it. The trail connected the County Line Trail with the Blake Mountain Trail to the north at about 3,500' in elevation. A long-time resident (consultant M. Stapp) of the area suggested that this was simply a spur trail linking the two main trails and was used by local homesteaders. It is

likely that this trail was also used by ranchers during the summer grazing season and therefore at least dates to sometime into the mid-to-late nineteenth century (15' USGS Pilot Creek 1951).



Historic Trails: Pilot Creek Watershed North Region (Refer to Map 5)

Blake Mountain Trail/Torrey Corrals Trail

The Blake Mountain Trail connected the Last Chance Trail at the northern end of Whiting Ridge with Blake Mountain, a prominent high point (5,905') on the crest of South Fork Mountain. Portions of this trail were also known as the Torrey Corrals Trail by some locals. Abner L. Torrey ran sheep (in partnership with George Gray) in this area in the late 1800s (consultant M. Rowley).

After dropping down to the south and east from Whiting Ridge near its junction with Pilot Ridge the trail passed by Torrey Corrals. After crossing Pilot Creek at Torrey Crossing the trail headed southeasterly for about one mile before turning to the northeast and climbing the west facing slope of South Fork Mountain to its crest just to the south of Blake Mountain. The trail was named after a settler, David A. Blake, who homesteaded on the slopes of South Fork Mountain in this vicinity in the early 1900s (Keter 2011:Table 2A). Interviews with long-time residents of the area (consultants M. Stapp and I. Stapp) indicated the trail was also used by homesteaders in the Pilot Creek watershed during the homesteading era. Historically, it has also been used by hunters to access the crest of South Fork Mountain from Pilot Ridge. As a result of the 1964 flood portions of this trail along Pilot Creek were destroyed by slides resulting from poor logging practices on some of the old isolated homestead parcels purchased by the Northern Redwood Lumber Company (Keter 2011).

Dan East Trail

The Dan East trail was the most northerly trail crossing of Pilot Creek and the most direct route linking Pilot Ridge with the northern crest of South Fork Mountain. The trail headed northeasterly from its junction with the Last Chance Trail near the southern end of Whiting Ridge dropping down, crossing Pilot Creek, and then ascending directly upslope to the crest of South Fork Mountain at a point about three miles to the north of Blake Mountain where it reconnected with the Last Chance/South Fork Mountain Trail.

The trail was steep as it climbed to the crest of South Fork Mountain from Pilot Creek but it was shorter by about four miles than taking the Last Chance Trail around the headwaters of the Pilot Creek basin in accessing the northern end of South Fork Mountain. Given its strategic location it probably dates to the prehistoric era and therefore it is not surprising that there are a number of prehistoric sites associated with this trail; including one site excavated during the Pilot Ridge excavation projects of the mid-1980s (Hildebrandt and Hayes 1985) and one test excavated by the author in the late 1980s.

The trail was named after settler Dan East, who built a cabin south of the trail (identified on the Blake Mountain USGS 7.5' map). The cabin was still standing in 1940 (consultants M. Stapp and I. Stapp). It is not known when East settled here but it is likely prior to the 1900s. Except for some portions of the trail to the west of Pilot Creek destroyed by private logging roads much of this trail was generally of high integrity in the 1980s and today portions of the trail (FS Trail 5E14) on the west facing slope of South Fork Mountain are still used by two-wheeled OHVs.

Hazen Ridge Trail

This short section of trail (about 2 miles in length) connects Pilot Ridge with the Blake Mountain/Torrey Corals Trail. From Pilot Ridge the trail follows the crest of Al Hazen Ridge as it descends northeast to Pilot Creek. Here, it met the Blake Mountain/Torrey Corals Trail just to the southwest of the mouth of Owl Creek. It is likely, given its location on a gently trending ridge dropping to Pilot Creek dominated by oak woodlands and grasslands (homestead records and personal observation), that this trail was used during both the prehistoric and the early historic period. It was named after settler Al Hazen, who established a homestead in 1902 on the ridge (Keter 2011:Table 1B).

Last Chance Trail

Use of the Last Chance Trail dates to the mid to late 1850s. It was one of several trails that were interconnected in order to provide packers an alternative route to Hyampom and Weaverville that could be used in the winter to avoid the heavy snows on South Fork Mountain. Many of the trails in the region have undergone name changes over time or have been known by several different names and that is especially the case for the Last Chance Ridge Trail. On some maps the section of the original Last Chance Trail connecting Pilot Ridge to South Fork Mountain by following the crest of Whiting Ridge and Last Chance Ridge--a distance of about 6 miles--was also referred later in time by ranchers working in the area as the Whiting Ridge Trail. The trail was named after a stockman, James Whiting, who spent summers in the area running livestock in the late 19th century and who made a "cash entry" purchase in 1891 of the parcel of land containing Whiting Springs (Keter 2011:Table 1A). There was a spur off this portion of the trail conveniently located to connect to Whiting Spring only about 300 or so yards below and to the east of the ridgeline. This trail was also used in the early 20th century by local homesteaders. As noted earlier, some historic maps label the section of the Pilot Ridge Trail extending north from the County Line Trail at Mud Springs to High Salt Ground as the Last Chance Trail.

At the junction of Pilot Ridge and Whiting Ridge, the Last Chance Trail circled to the northeast on the crest of Whiting Ridge towards Last Chance Ridge (as of 2010 a deep cut section of the original trail could still be seen on the crest of Whiting Ridge just to the west of FH1 and just to the south of its junction with Last Chance Ridge that still retained a high degree of integrity). Last Chance Ridge forms the headwaters divide between the Pilot

Creek and Grouse Creek basins and directly connects from Whiting Ridge to South Fork Mountain. The section of trail on Last Chance Ridge passed by a spring at the head of Pilot Creek. There is a prehistoric/historic archeological site on the ridge suggesting that this location has been visited for centuries. According to one consultant (Rowley) the trail continued from the unnamed spring (possibly called Last Chance Spring) east to the junction of Last Chance Ridge with the northern end of South Fork Mountain. Here, the trail headed south climbing the north facing slope of South Fork Mountain (the divide between the South Fork Trinity River and the Pilot Creek watersheds) for about two and a half miles to the crest of South Fork Mountain.

South Fork Mountain is a long well defined and relatively broad ridge varying in an altitude of generally between 5,000' and 6,000' in elevation that extends southwest for forty miles. At that point, one can continue to the south on the divide between the Mad River and the South Fork Trinity River and then east along the divide between the South Fork of the Trinity River and the Middle Fork Eel River. Following this divide to the east (there is still a trail along this ridge) eventually leads to the headwaters of the East Fork of Cottonwood Creek flowing east to the Sacramento River. Here, one can continue south on the Pacific Ocean/Sacramento River divide. Pilot Ridge, Whiting Ridge, Last Chance Ridge, and South Fork Mountain are part of this extended complex of interconnecting ridges extending for nearly 150 miles from Orrick at the mouth of Redwood Creek south into Mendocino and eventually Lake Counties. Numerous prehistoric sites have been recorded along the crest of this complex of interconnected ridges that was part of a major travel corridor during the prehistoric era. Several of the prehistoric sites situated along the northern crest of South Fork Mountain were excavated during the Pilot Ridge excavations of the mid 1980s and like those sites on Pilot Ridge dated to over 6,000 years B.P. (Keter 1994, Hayes and Hildebrandt 1985). The entire complex of interconnected ridges in Pilot Ridge Country (Pilot, Whiting, and Last Chance Ridges and the northern ten miles of South Fork Mountain) has been determined Eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as the Pilot Ridge/South Fork Mountain Archaeological and Historic District.

One consultant (Rowley) indicated that the section of trail from Last Chance Ridge south to Blake Mountain was developed and used later in time, after the boom years of the gold rush era, and was referred to as the Last Chance Trail simply because it connected Blake Mountain (a high point on the crest of South Fork Mountain) with Last Chance Ridge. This section of the Last Chance Trail from the junction of Last Chance Ridge and South Fork Mountain extending south to Blake Mountain is also referred to as the South Fork Mountain Trail on some maps of the region.

Some consultants (M. Stapp and I. Stapp) indicated that it was known as the Last Chance Trail since the trail provided the "last chance" to get around the high country of South Fork Mountain for those traveling east to Hyampom. Taking this route via the northern end of South Fork Mountain in traveling to Hyampom from Pilot Ridge to avoid the snows that blanket South Fork Mountain in the winter is, however, problematic. That is because from Last Chance Ridge to Blake Mountain the section of trail heading to the south and

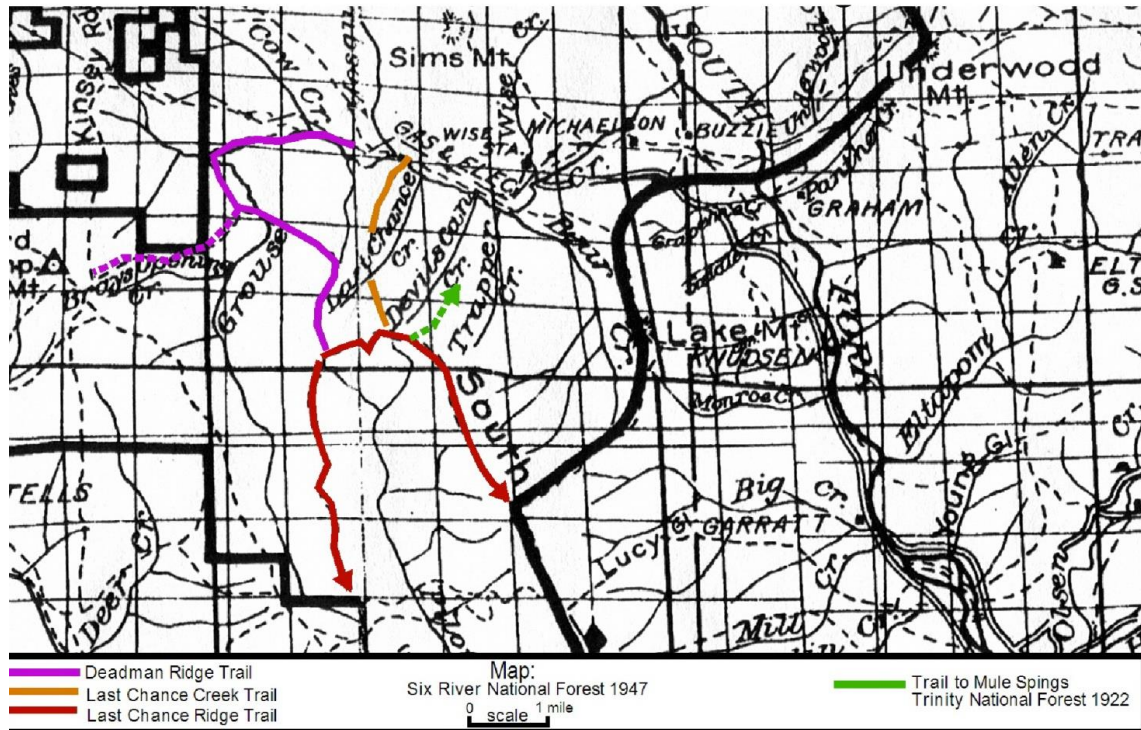
ascending South Fork Mountain has some of the heaviest snow cover found on South Fork Mountain. The trail follows this north facing divide between Pilot Creek and the South Fork Trinity River for about two and half miles climbing from about 4,400' at Last Chance Ridge to about 5,700' where it hits the relatively level and broad crest of South Fork Mountain. The Dan East Trail also hits the crest of South Fork Mountain at about this same point. Snow closes FH1 in this area until mid June some years. For example, in mid June 2010, there was still three feet of snow at about 5,000' in elevation on FH1 making it impassable (personal observation).

Although there is a lack of historical documentation on this matter it does appear that one purpose of the trail was "to get around the high country of South Fork Mountain" for pack trains using the Eel River Weaverville/County Line Trail in trying avoid the snows on South Fork Mountain in traveling to Hyampom. The spring at the head of Last Chance Ridge is located at 4,700' in elevation. From here by taking a trail north and dropping down from the headwaters at Last Chance Ridge to Grouse Creek is a distance of only about two and a half to three miles. At that point a trail would have connected at about 2,000' in elevation with the Humboldt-Hyampom Trail. This well-traveled trail leading from Humboldt Bay to Hyampom and would have been a logical route to avoid the winter snows of South Fork Mountain in order to reach Hyampom (Whiting Ridge and Last Chance Ridge also receive a substantial amount of snow and it is likely that even this route would also have been closed for a significant amount of time most winters).

A review of the various historic maps and topographical maps for the region indicate that two trails headed north from the crest of Last Chance Ridge dropping into the Grouse Creek watershed to connect with the Humboldt Hyampom Trail (Maps 6-7). Refer to the next section for a discussion of these trails. It is also possible that a third trail may have led northeasterly down to Grouse Creek from Mule Spring located just the east of the junction of Last Chance Ridge and South Fork Mountain (I used to drive an old jeep road that followed this general route in the early 1980s). From Mule Spring to Grouse Creek is only about two miles following a trending ridge as it descends rather steeply to the northeast. The 1931 Trinity National Forest Map shows a trail at this location going part way down the ridge but not all the way to Grouse Creek (Map 6).

Map 6

Trails to North off Last Chance Ridge (see Map 7)



"Monroes" Trail/Lake Mountain Trail

Portions of this trail show up on the very inaccurately plotted 1873 GLO Plat labeled as "Monroes Trail" it was also referred to by local homesteaders in the area as the Lake Mountain Trail (consultants M. Stapp and I. Stapp). It heads easterly towards Bennett Peak and Lake Mountain from the crest of South Fork Mountain near the eastern terminus of the Dan East Trail. The trail shows up on some but not all National Forest maps of the area. Monroe Creek has its headwaters in the Bennett Peak region located about two mile to the east of South Fork Mountain.

Pilot Creek Watershed: Additional Unnamed Trails

During the brief florescence of the homesteading era in the early 20th century numerous homesteads were established within the Pilot Ridge watershed and the area immediately to the west of Pilot Ridge dropping down to the Mad River. Homesteaders blazed a number of trails that were used to connect their homesteads with the main trails. Many were ephemeral in nature and if they were named the names have been lost to history. Some of these trails were noted on the very detailed 1922 Belcher Title and Abstract maps (Belcher T&A 1922: Maps 14, 16, 17). Several of these trails have been plotted (Maps 2 ,5, 7) refer to Appendix 1 for an explanation of the process used to map these trails.

Historic Trails:

Pilot Ridge Country Northwestern Region (Refer to Map 7)

Near High Salt Ground at about the junction of Pilot and Whiting Ridges, the Pilot Ridge Trail heads to the northwest ascending a rather steep south facing slope of open grasslands several hundred feet in elevation before it again levels out and passes through an area dominated by an oak woodland of brewers oak (*Quercus garryana* var. *breweri*), white oak (*Quercus garryana*), and, today, invading Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). From this vantage point the view to the south and west is dramatic. Kings Peak is visible to the southwest, to the south are the Lassics near Zenia and Pratt Mountain in the Garberville area. Mad River Rock and the Yolla Bolly country further to the south are visible on the horizon and to the east and southeast South Fork Mountain stretches off the horizon. Pilot Rock a large rock outcrop and prominent topographical feature lies less than a half mile to the west (Image 4). Max Rowley informed me that:

Pilot Rock was named prior to 1862 by white settlers using the lush grasslands for cattle and sheep grazing. Pilot Rock is located geographically so it can be seen from many directions at far distances. Pioneers and soldiers used Pilot Rock for a guide or bearing reference for the lay of the land. Pilot Creek was named because of its proximity to Pilot Rock.



Image 4
View west to Pilot Rock from the viewpoint above High Salt Ground
(Photo G. Gmoser 1980)

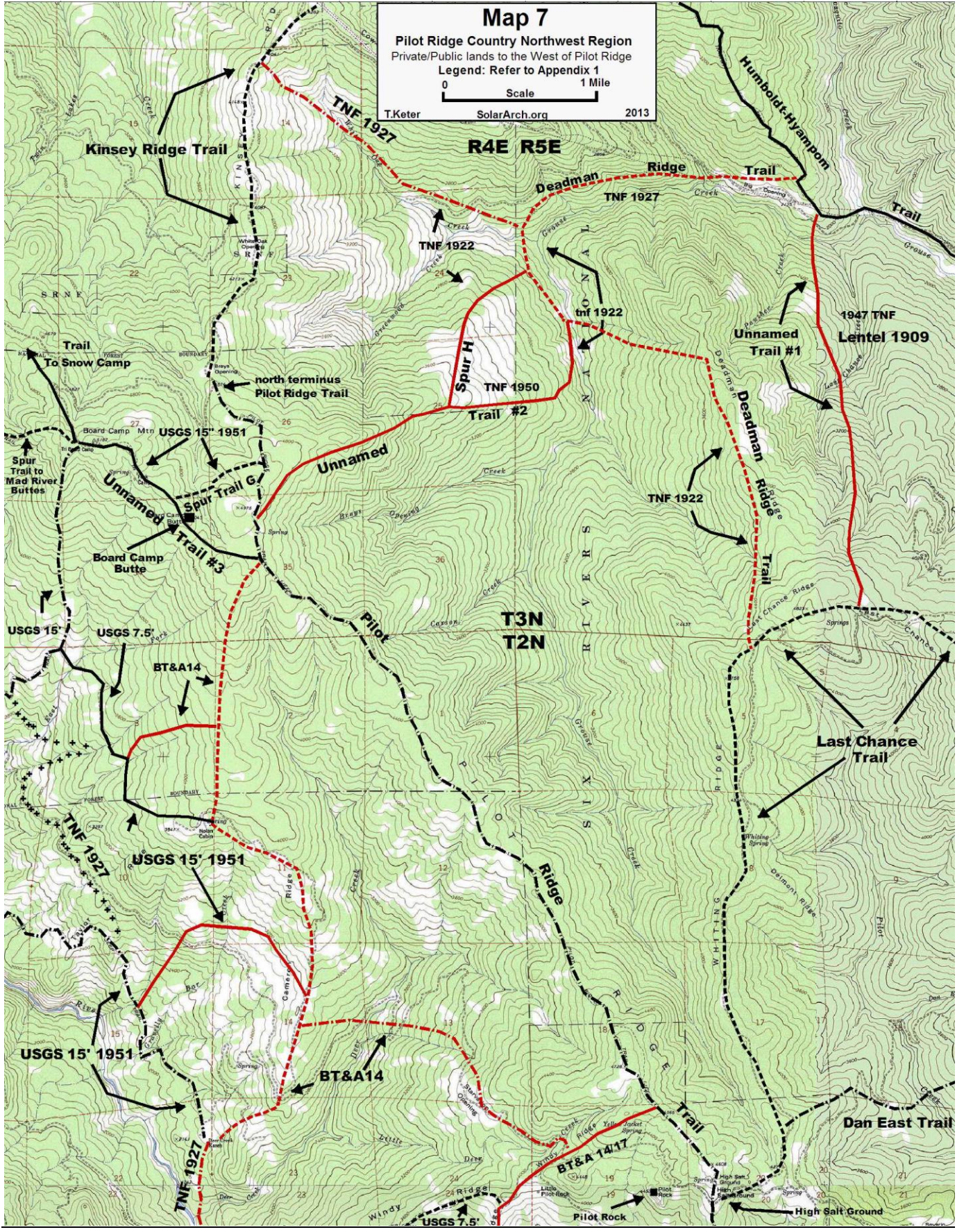
Today, much of the region lying to the west of Pilot Ridge and to the north of about Holm Ridge (Map 3)--that is those side drainages feeding into the Mad River from the east (from Holm Creek, north to Bug Creek)--is owned by the Simpson Timber Company. For that reason, there is much less data in the public record about this region. Also, I only traveled through this area a few times on the private roads that were constructed in the mid 1950s by timber companies in order to provide an access road to log on private lands on the eastern slopes of South Fork Mountain (Keter 2011). For that reason the trails in the region to the west of the crest of Pilot Ridge are not well documented and most (except as noted) have not been visited or hiked. Refer to Appendix 1 for a discussion of the maps and methodology to plot the trails in this area.

Map 7

Pilot Ridge Country Northwest Region
Private/Public lands to the West of Pilot Ridge

Legend: Refer to Appendix 1
0 1 Mile
Scale

T.Keter SolarArch.org 2013



Pilot Ridge Trail (Northwestern Section)

After ascending the slope north of High Salt Ground the trail continues at about 4,400' to 4,600' in elevation along the crest of Pilot Ridge (with occasional views east to the Trinity Alps) for about eight miles to Kinsey Ridge (at the head of Redwood Creek). As noted earlier, the Pilot Ridge Trail was among the earliest to be used during the historic era and most certainly dates to the prehistoric era as dozens of prehistoric sites have been recorded and several excavated along this portion of the crest of Pilot Ridge. At the northern end of Pilot Ridge the trail connected with several other trails including the Kinsey Ridge Trail and the trail to Snow Camp (Unnamed Trail #3/Board Camp Trail) both trails connected with the Humboldt-Hyampom Trail several miles to the north (see below). Prior to the construction of FH1 in the mid 1980s, a jeep trail generally followed the original blazed trail from Kinsey Ridge south. This route was an extremely rough and challenging drive taking over two hours to travel the eight miles or so south to High Salt Ground. Today, several sections of the old trail (or general "pathway" of the original trail see appendix 1) in this area are now used as two-wheeled OHV trails.



Image 5
Pilot Ridge Trail/4WD Trail
(300 meters south of Pilot Ridge junction with Kinsey Ridge view to northwest)
(Photo T.Keter 1980)

Unnamed Trail # 1/Last Chance Creek Trail

As noted in the section on the Last Chance Ridge Trail, two trails and possibly a third headed to the north from Last Chance Ridge descending into the upper Goose Creek watershed to connect with the Humboldt-Hyampom Trail. One these trails, Unnamed Trail #1 (given its location it may possibly have been referred to as the Last Chance Creek Trail) (Lentell 1909, TNF 1922,1950, SRNF 1947), headed north from a point near the perennial springs at the head of the Pilot Creek watershed on Last Chance Ridge. The trail dropped off Last Chance Ridge into the Grouse Creek watershed following a steeply descending ridge, crossing Last Chance Creek, and then following the descending ridge between Last Chance and Panther Creeks to Grouse Creek. After crossing Grouse Creek near its confluence with Last Chance Creek the trail joined the Humboldt-Hyampom Trail just to the west of Mosquito Creek.

Deadman Ridge Trail

This trail shows up on a number of historic maps (Lentell 1909, TNF 1922,1950, SRNF 1947, Belcher T&A Map 17) and along with the Last Chance Creek Trail connected Last Chance Ridge with the Humboldt-Hyampom Trail. Max Rowley indicated that the trail was referred to as the Deadman Ridge Trail. This trail was not shown on the 1951,15' USGS map. For that reason, given the scale of Forest Service maps (1/2" to the mile or less) used to plot the trail, the route is approximate (refer to Appendix 1 for details).

From about the junction of Last Chance Ridge and Whiting Ridge the trail circled to the northwest crossing Grouse Creek about one mile to the south of Brays Opening Creek. The trail then split with Unnamed Trail #2 (see below) heading to the west upslope on the trending ridge immediately to the north of Brays Opening Creek to the crest of Pilot Ridge. The Deadman Creek Trail continued paralleling Grouse Creek downstream (past Unnamed Trail #2 Spur H) to White Oak Creek where another trail headed off to the northwest to Kinsey Ridge. After crossing White Oak Creek, the trail continued paralleling Grouse Creek as it bends to the east. The trail met the Humboldt-Hyampom Trail at the foot of the ridge dropping down from Grouse Creek Mountain just to the east Mosquito Creek.

Unnamed Trail #2

This unnamed trail provided a short cut from the north end of Pilot Ridge Trail to Last Chance Ridge. The trail headed down slope to the east from a point about one mile south of Brays Opening to meet the Deadman Trail about 2.5 miles below Last Chance Ridge at about the point where it crosses Grouse Creek. This alternate route from the north end of Pilot Ridge to Last Chance Ridge saved about seven to eight miles of travel by not taking the Pilot Ridge Trail south to High Salt Ground and then circling back to Last Chance Ridge via

Whiting Ridge on the Last Chance Trail to Last Chance Spring. No information could be found related to this trail. It is plotted on numerous Forest Service maps (see Appendix 2).

Spur Trail H (shown on some Forest Service maps) splits off the main trail to the northeast part way down the ridge; connecting to the Deadman Creek Trail just to the south of White Oak Creek. It is apparent that this spur trail was used to provide a short cut for those connecting with the Humboldt-Hyampom Trail from the Pilot Ridge Trail.

[In the general vicinity of where this trail hits the crest of Pilot Ridge there are located several perennial springs associated with both historic and prehistoric evidence of intensive use (see CA-Hum-546H)].

Unnamed #3/Board Camp Mountain Trail

Although the original name of the trail is unknown, today the remaining unmaintained section of the trail located on Forest Service lands along the Redwood Creek/Mad River watershed divide from about Board Camp Mountain east towards Pilot Ridge is known as the Board Camp Trail. From Board Camp Mountain the trail headed northwest to Snow Camp finally connecting with the Humboldt-Hyampom Trail somewhere near High Prairie. Some locals refer to the section of trail from Board Camp Mountain to Snow Camp as the Snow Camp Trail.

It is likely that this is one of the earliest trails in the region. This section of unmaintained trail still retains some integrity (FS trail system number 4E27) and continues east from Board Camp Butte along the watershed divide for about one-half mile where it is lost in an area that was logged in the late 1980s and a landing was constructed right on the ridgeline. [An old logging road leads up to this point from FH1 about 1.2 miles north of the intersection of FH1 and 4N38. I hiked this section of trail in August of 2010].

It connected with the Pilot Ridge trail near the head of the three way divide with South Fork Trinity River, Redwood Creek, and Bug Creek (Mad River) watersheds. A spur trail (Spur Trail G) circled to the northeast just west of Board Camp Butte dropping down to Pilot Ridge to the south of Brays Opening providing a short cut to those heading towards Kinsey Ridge and the northern end of Pilot Ridge. Most of the area that this trail passed through was destroyed by road building and timber harvest activities in the late 1980s. The trail connected to the east with the Pilot Ridge Trail near its junction with Unnamed Trail #2 and the springs discussed earlier that are located near the head of Brays Opening Creek.



Image 6
View north from Board Camp Mountain near the Board Camp Trail
at the headwaters of Redwood Creek
(T. Keter 1980)

Spur Trail to Mad River Buttes

There is a trail leading west from the headwaters divide between Bug Creek to the south and Boulder Creek to the north just to the northwest of the location of the old Board Camp Mountain Lookout (little evidence remains of the lookout). This trail crosses a narrow and well defined divide between the two watersheds and provides sweeping views to the Pacific Coast, to Pilot Ridge country to the south, and the Trinity Alps to the northeast. The trail leads to the Bug Creek Buttes /Mad River Buttes region and is still used today by hunters. Numerous prehistoric flake and tool scatters are found in the area (personal observation), evidence that this area was used intensively by Native American.

Kinsey Ridge Trail

The historic name of this section of trail is not known. It traverses Kinsey Ridge connecting the north end of Pilot Ridge Trail with the Humboldt-Hyampom Trail about four miles to the north where it crosses the Redwood Creek-Grouse Creek Divide just southwest of Grouse Mountain. Given its strategic location as a link to Pilot Ridge this trail also probably dates to the early historic era. It was also quite likely a main travel corridor for Native Americans.

Other Trails Plotted on Map 7

A number of other unnamed and uninventoried trails are plotted on Map 7 based on historic maps. As noted earlier, much of this region to the west of Six Rivers National Forest is on private lands. Refer to Appendix 1 for an explanation of the process used to plot trails in this region. Many of these trails were most likely blazed during the homesteading era of the early twentieth century when there were numerous homesteads in this area and for a short time even a school (consultants M. Stapp and I. Stapp, Keter 1994, Keter 2011). Nearly all these homesteaders eventually sold their properties to the Northern Redwood Lumber Company. This region was heavily logged in the late 1940s to mid 1950s and is laced with tractor trails and logging roads resulting from timber operations (and the resulting erosion problems related to poor logging practices) (Keter 2010:3-4).

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this paper to the late Maxwell (Max) Rowley. I am greatly indebted to his pioneering research on the trails of eastern Humboldt and western Trinity Counties. We not only worked together for over 20 years but were good friends sharing a love of local history--especially that of the old trails in Pilot Ridge country and in the Yolla Bolly country further to the south. Max was born in Hydesville in 1928 and knew many of the early homesteaders or members of their families who had homestead or established ranches in the Shower Pass and Pilot Ridge country.

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1990 Settlement and Conflict: The Refuge Period and Historic Settlement in the North Fork Eel River Basin 1854-1864. Paper Presented to the Society for California Archaeology. April 6, 1990, Foster City, CA. MS. on file Six Rivers National Forest, eureka, CA.

1994 An Environmental and Cultural History of the Pilot Creek Watershed. MS. on file Six Rivers National Forest, Eureka, CA.

1997 Historic Trails of the Mad River Ranger District. MS. on file Six Rivers National Forest, Eureka, CA.

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Kroeber, Alfred L.

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1978 Tribes of California. Berkeley, UC Press. [Reprinted from Contributions to North American Ethnology, Vol. III, 1877, GPO, Washington.]

Maps

USGS 15" Pilot Creek (1951)
USGS 7.5' Blake Mountain (1979)
Board Camp Mountain (1973)
Showers Mountain (1973)
Sims Mountain (1973)

Government Land Office (GLO) maps 1872*, 1873, 1897 on file Six Rivers National Forest

Trinity County Lowden Survey Maps 1894, 1903 (they can be found at the Trinity County Historical Society, Weaverville.

Belcher Title and Abstract 1923, Eureka. Maps 14*, 16*, 17*.

Set of maps showing land ownership for Humboldt County. On the Web or the Humboldt Room, Humboldt State University Library, Arcata, CA.

Six Rivers National Forest Map, 1947*.

Trinity National Forest Maps 1920*, 1922*, 1927*, 1931*, 1941*, 1950

Humboldt County Map, Lintell 1909* (On file Humboldt County Historical Society, Eureka)

* Maps can be found in Appendix 2

Newspapers

Humboldt Historian, Humboldt Historical Society, Eureka, CA.

Humboldt Times (copies available Humboldt Room, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA.)

Eureka Times Standard, Eureka, CA.

Consultants

Max Rowley (See above dedication)

Avocational historian and life-long resident of Humboldt County.

Marvin and Irene Stapp

I greatly appreciate the information on Pilot Ridge country provided by the late Marvin and Isabel Petersen Stapp. They were extremely generous in sharing their knowledge (and photos) of the area and their information was invaluable. Marvin Stapp's parents established a homestead just to the west of Pilot Ridge in the Wild Cat Creek area in 1918. Isabel Stapp's parents homesteaded in the Bug Creek Butte area in 1918. Not only had they hiked or traveled by horseback over nearly all of the trails discussed in this overview, but they personally knew many of the settlers who had homesteaded in the region during the early 20th century. In the early 1980s, they still spent their summers at the old homestead just to the west of Pilot Ridge (T3N R5E S32 labeled as the Singleton Ranch on the 7.5' USGS map) and I used to pass by their place when using the jeep trail (Spur D Maps 2 and 5) to access the southern portion of Pilot Ridge. At that time they owned the only remaining occupied (on a part-time basis) homestead parcel in Pilot Ridge country.

Appendix 1

Key to USGS MAPS 2, 3, 5,7

Map 2: Blake Mountain (1979)
Board Camp Mountain (1973)
Showers Mountain (1973)
Sims Mountain (1973)

Map 3: Blake Mountain (1979)
Sims Mountain (1973)

Map 5: Blake Mountain (1979)
Board Camp Mountain (1973)
Showers Mountain (1973)
Sims Mountain (1973)

Map 7: Blake Mountain (1979)
Board Camp Mountain (1973)
Showers Mountain (1973)
Sims Mountain (1973)

Mapping Historic Trails as Cultural and Historical Features of the Landscape

Historic Trails can be recorded and have the potential to qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (criteria D) as linear features on the ground having such physical characteristics such as a tread and blazes. They can also qualify with no visible identifying features remaining on the ground based on historical data including maps, documents, records, and interviews with knowledgeable consultants (for example, the Lewis and Clark Trail under National Register Criteria A and B). I have followed that practice here by not only recording trails that exhibited physical evidence of their existence (treads and blazes) but those based on the historical record and interviews with local consultants.

The section below is summarized from direction provided in the *National Historic Trails Federal Trail Data Standards* (2010:2.1.3:Appendix B) concerning the evaluation of and recordation of historic trails:

...Historic trails can consist of a path, a route, a corridor, a road, a river/stream, etc....Well-defined variants of an historic trail may be caused by changes in water, feed, and weather conditions; or the simple human desire to find a better, faster, and easier route. Routes frequently divide into braids. Trail braiding occurred when travelers found different routes around obstacles. One braid may go north of a butte and another south. At creek and river crossings braids spread out to find the best

ford. If one braid was wet and marshy, a new braid was formed on higher, drier ground.

There may be many parallel swales running very close to one another. Swales occurred because travelers didn't like to eat one another's dust and would spread out whenever possible and also because old swales were often deeply rutted and muddy, making travel easier a few feet away.

Mapping Process for Plotting Historic Trails

The plotting of trails within the Pilot Creek watershed (Maps 2,3,5,7) was accomplished by referencing numerous historic maps (see Appendix 1). Then based on over three decades of on-the-ground surveys and exploration of this region, I then plotted the routes on 7.5' USGS (1:24,000) maps. Past field surveys have generally confirmed the accuracy of the USGS maps and Forest Service maps.

[Refer to Keter 1997 for an earlier version of this overview for Forest Service site numbers and Trinomials where issued by the clearinghouse for many of the trails discussed in this overview.]

During much of the 20th century these trails were maintained by the Forest Service for administrative and recreational purposes. Most trails were originally blazed with a single axe-cut blaze on trees (at about 5-6 feet above the ground) along the route. In the 1950s Forest Service employees (for some unknown reason) reblazed most of the trails on the Mad River Ranger District with what has been termed a "dotted i" blaze since it resembles the letter "i" (furthermore, some of the blazes were then painted yellow to help them stand out). Image 3 shows a Douglas-fir with a rapidly--due to age--disappearing dotted "i" blaze. In some cases the trails were simply reblazed by placing a smaller sized blaze directly above the original blaze. Much of the time, however, it appears that new trees were blazed.

In this region I have found that blazes last the longest on oaks (*Quercus* spp.) and incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*). In the early 1980s I found one blaze on an incense cedar on a remote trail, just east of Mule Slide near the Lassics (associated with serpentine nutrient deficient soils), that dated back at least 75 and possibly 100 years.

It is clear that some of the geographic place names as well as the names of many of the trails have changed in Pilot Ridge country over time or have sometimes been inaccurately labeled on maps. For example, a crossing of the Mad River on the Eel River-Hyampom Trail (County Line Trail) is referred to in some historical accounts (see this paper) as Olmstead Crossing but is now labeled "Olsen Crossing" on USGS and most other maps. Another example is the 1922 Belcher Title and Abstract map (Map 17) that has the extreme southern end of Pilot Ridge labeled as "Holm Ridge" and Whiting Ridge labeled as "Pilot

Ridge" (this series of maps is, however, quite accurate overall).

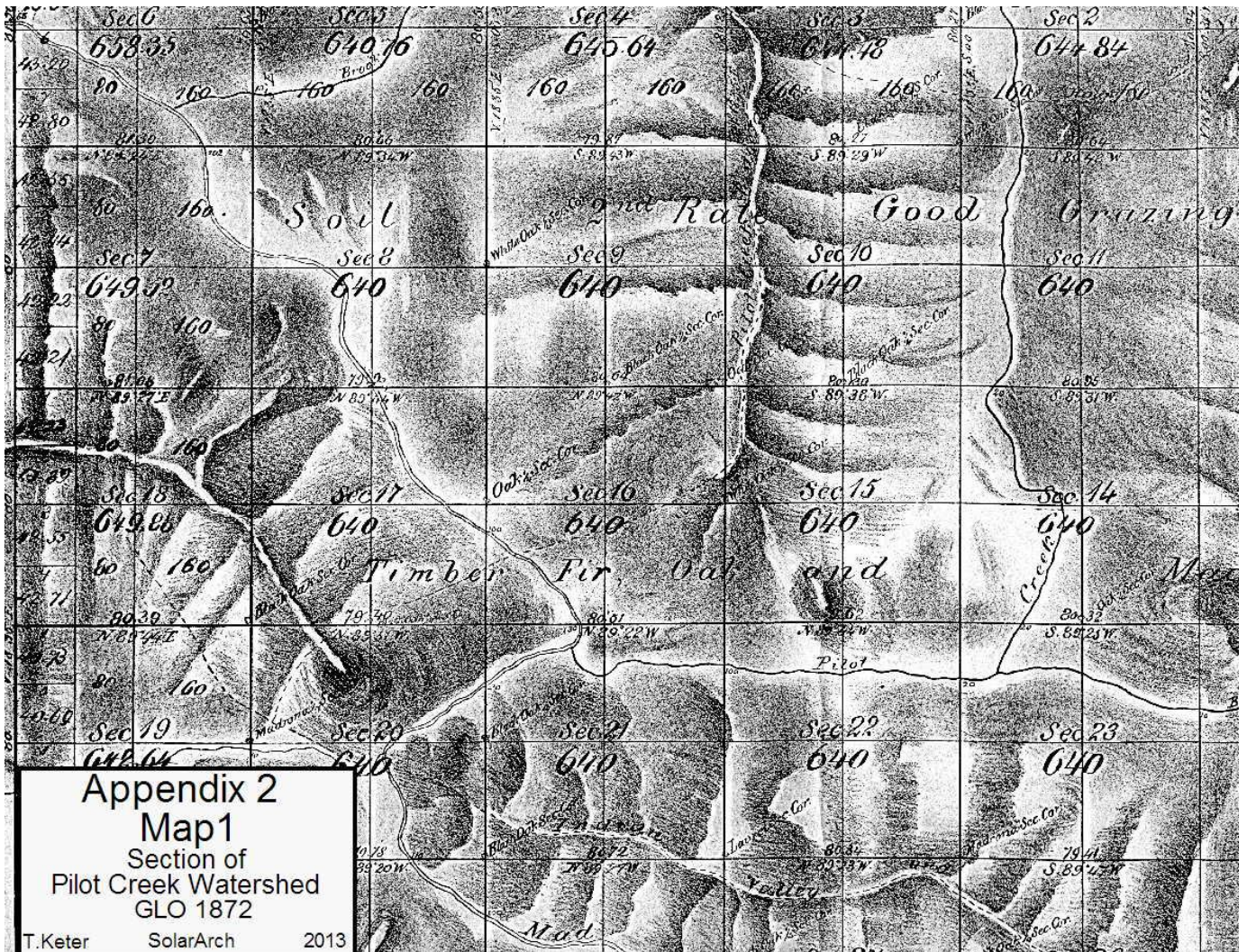
The exact location of some trails plotted on private lands adjacent to National Forest lands is somewhat problematic . Therefore, these trails are plotted in red on Maps 2, 3, 5, and 7. The scale of the maps used to plot some these trails is very large (one inch to the mile or one-half-inch to the mile). In these cases in mapping the route I have also referenced and studied topographical maps, Google Earth, general topography of the terrain, information from consultants, and relied on my general knowledge of the area. No trails were mapped unless they were identified and plotted on at least two historic maps.

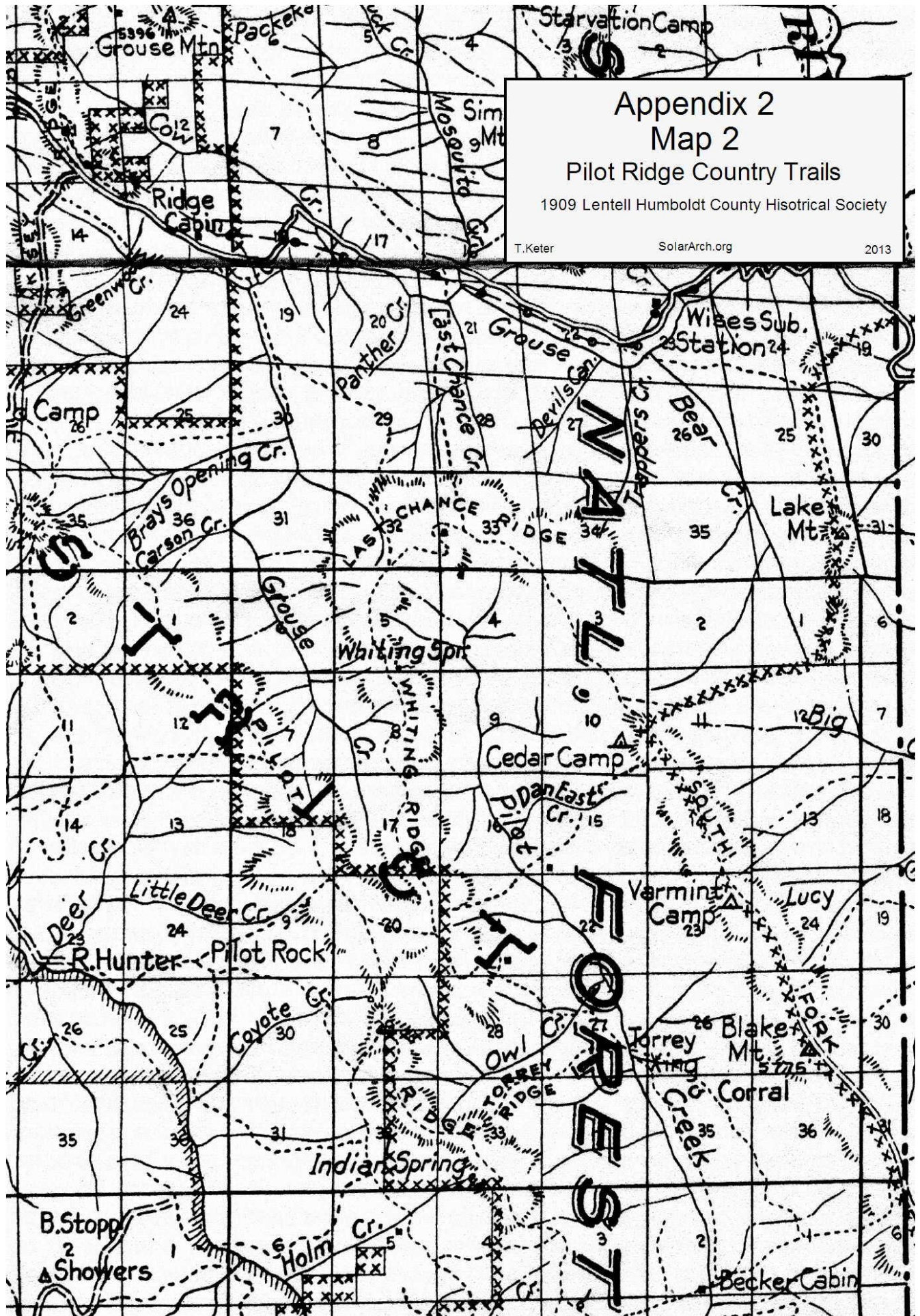
GLO Maps and Cadastral Surveys

As a result of the remoteness of Pilot Ridge country, well into the second half of the 20th century many of the Township and Section lines in this area remained poorly surveyed and inaccurately mapped. For that reason, the original GLO survey maps from the 1870s often do not match the Township and Section lines established by modern cadastral surveys. Section lines and corners have been as much as a mile off in the North Coast Ranges as many of the original surveys in this region were notoriously inaccurate. In Humboldt County these early surveys of remote areas like Pilot Ridge country are commonly referred to as "bar room" surveys since the surveyors never even made it into the field but put their surveys together at their local saloon. This historical fact is reflected today in the highly irregular Township, Range, and Section lines found on today's 7.5' USGS maps for this region.

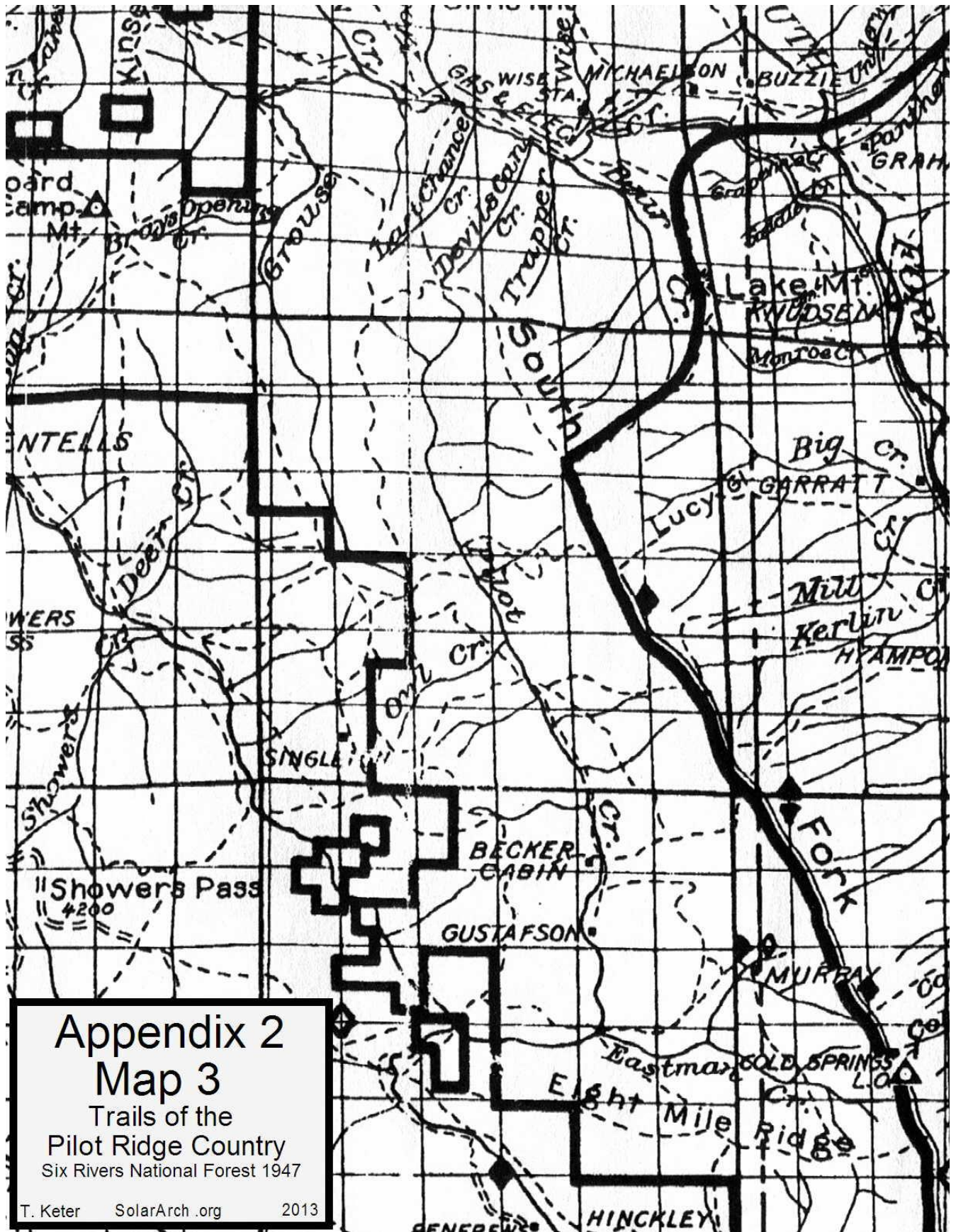
Appendix 2

Historic Maps used in Mapping Trails in Pilot Ridge Country

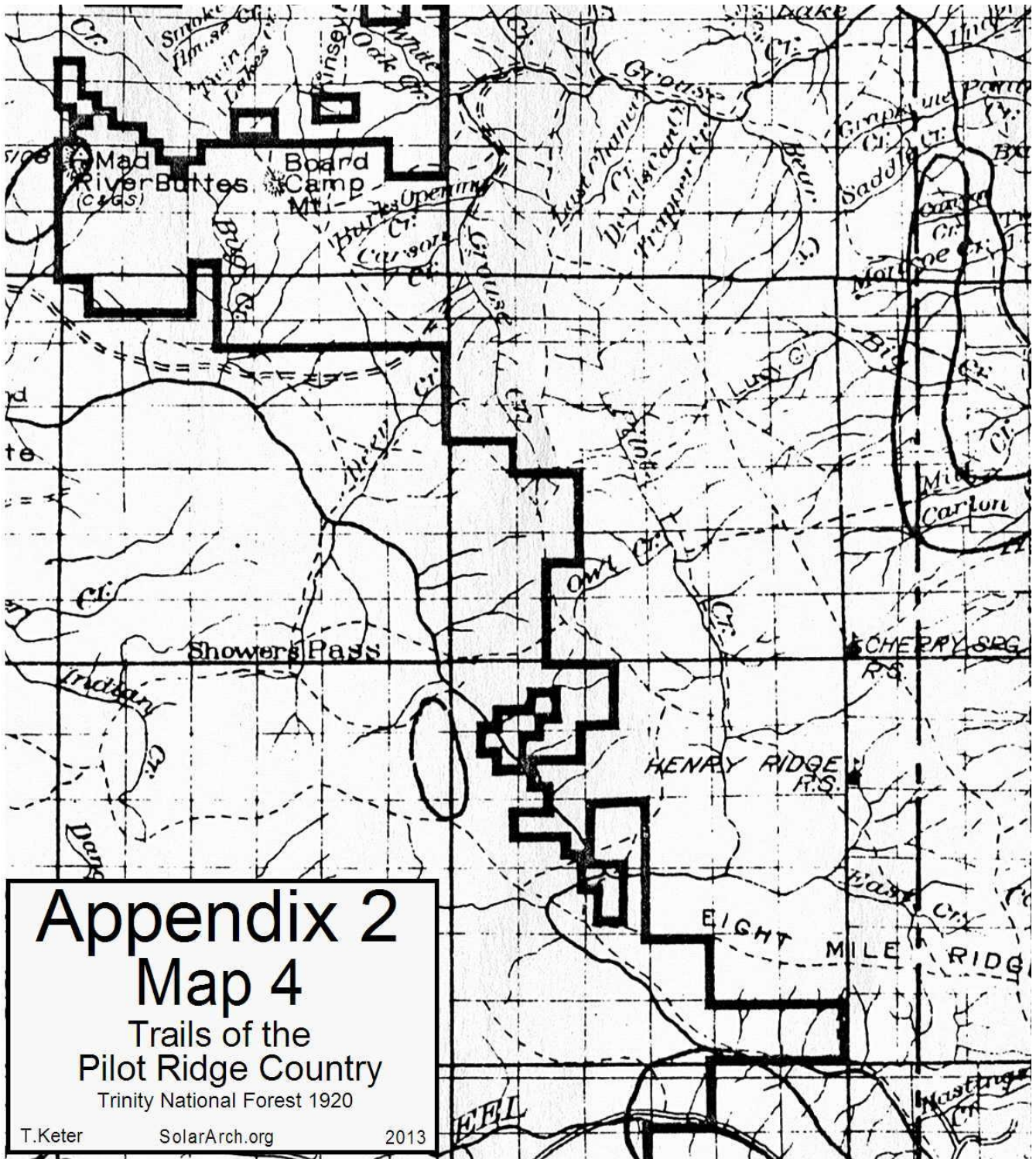


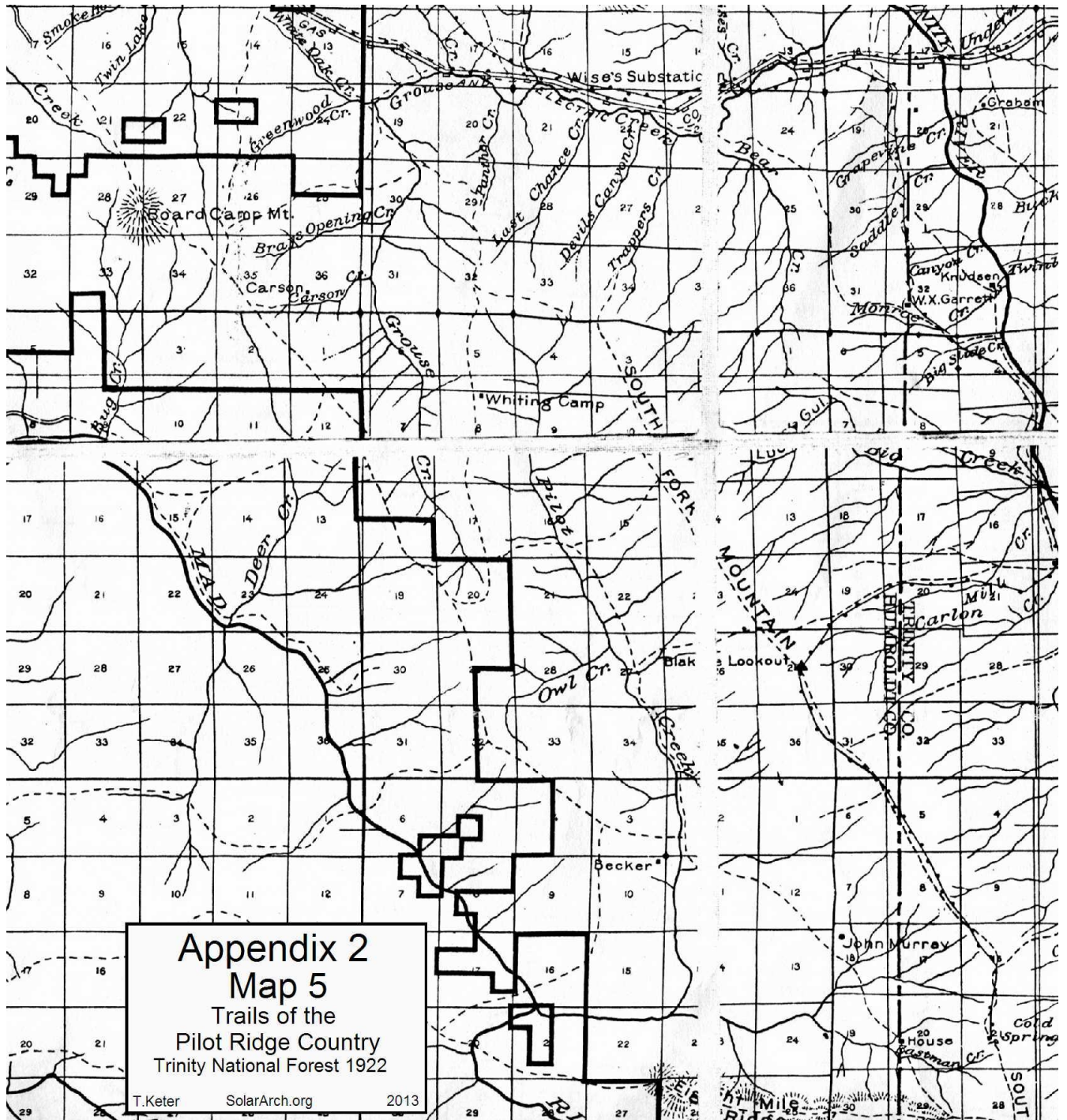


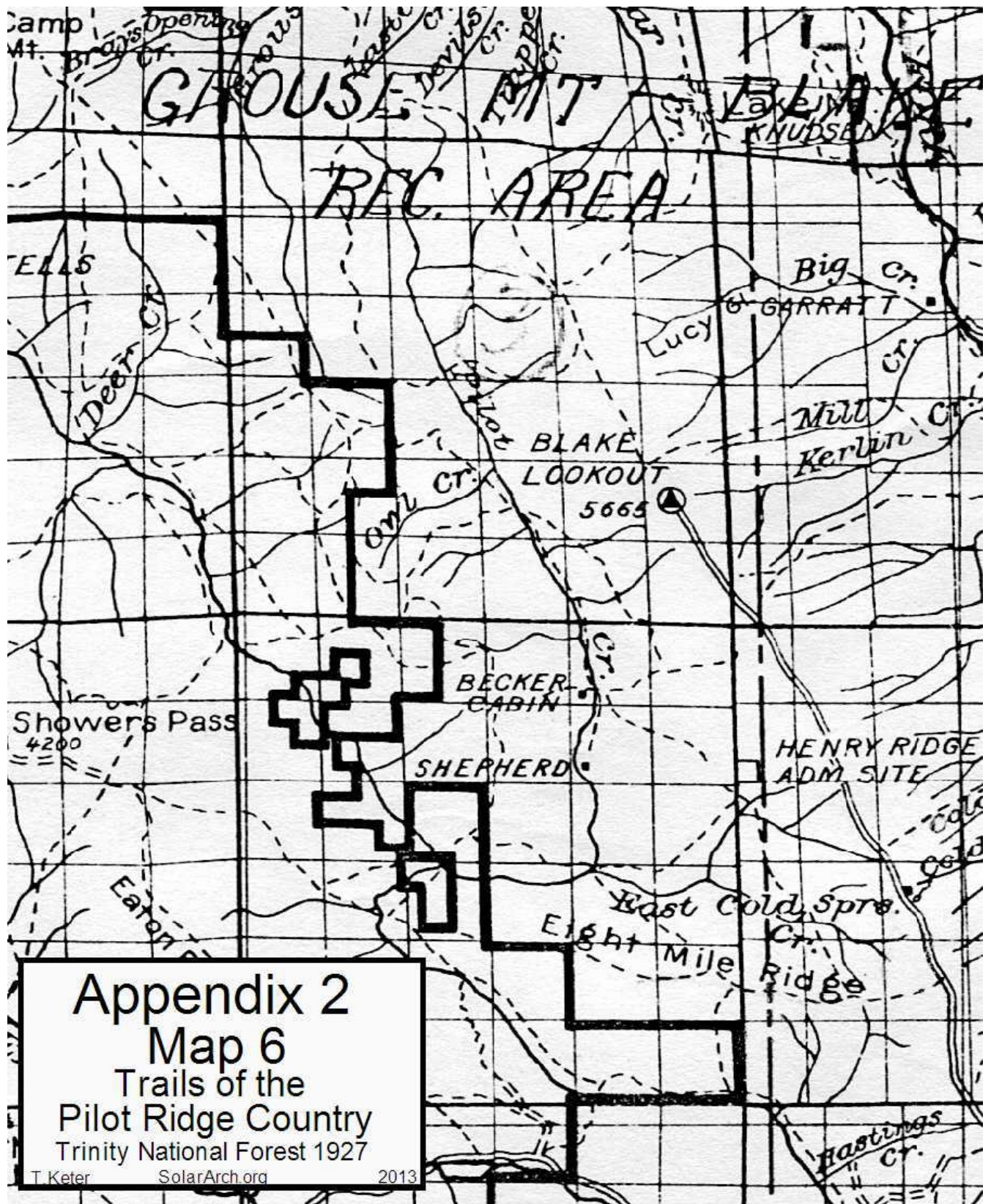
Appendix 2
Map 2
Pilot Ridge Country Trails
1909 Lentell Humboldt County Historical Society
T.Keter SolarArch.org 2013

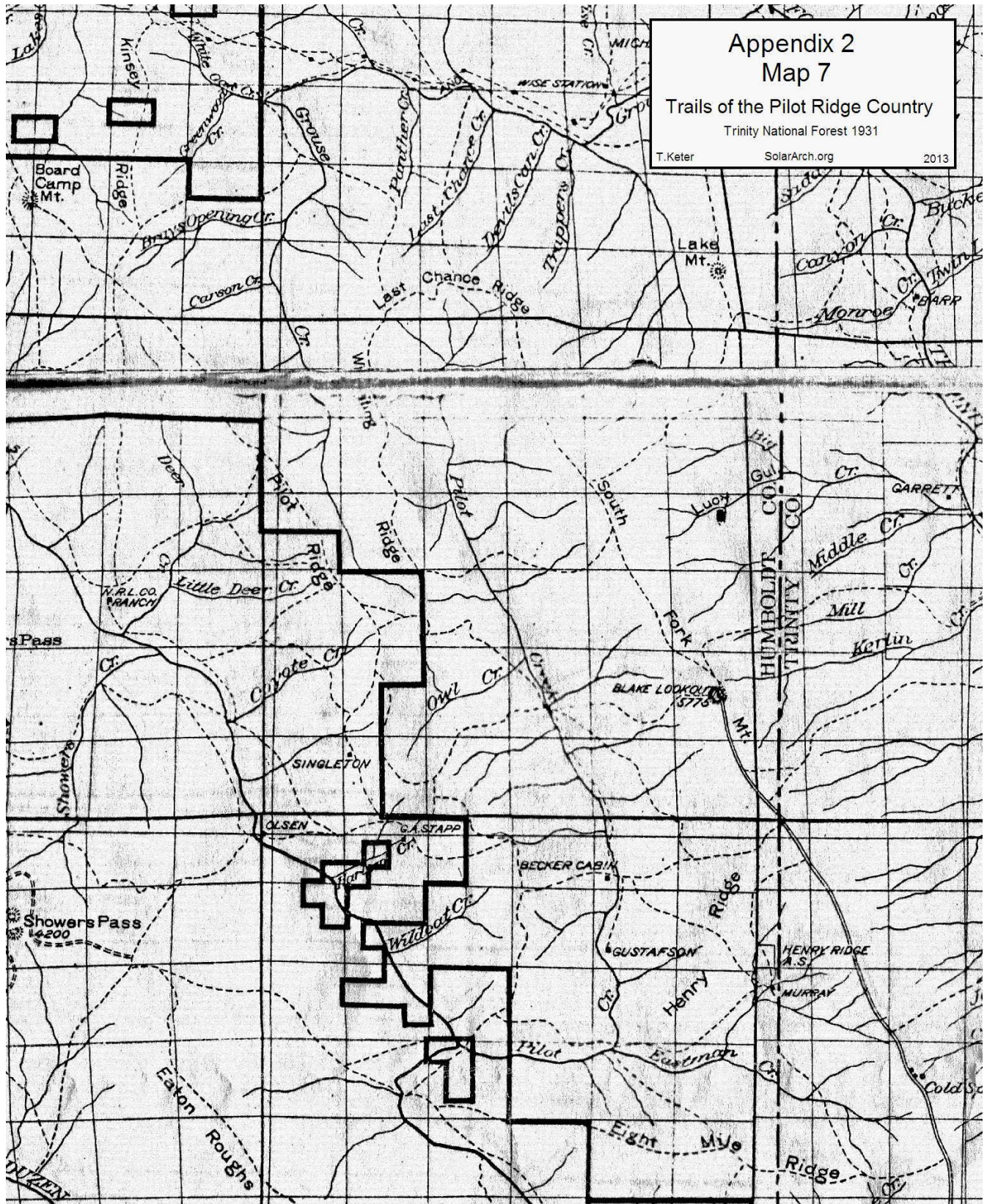


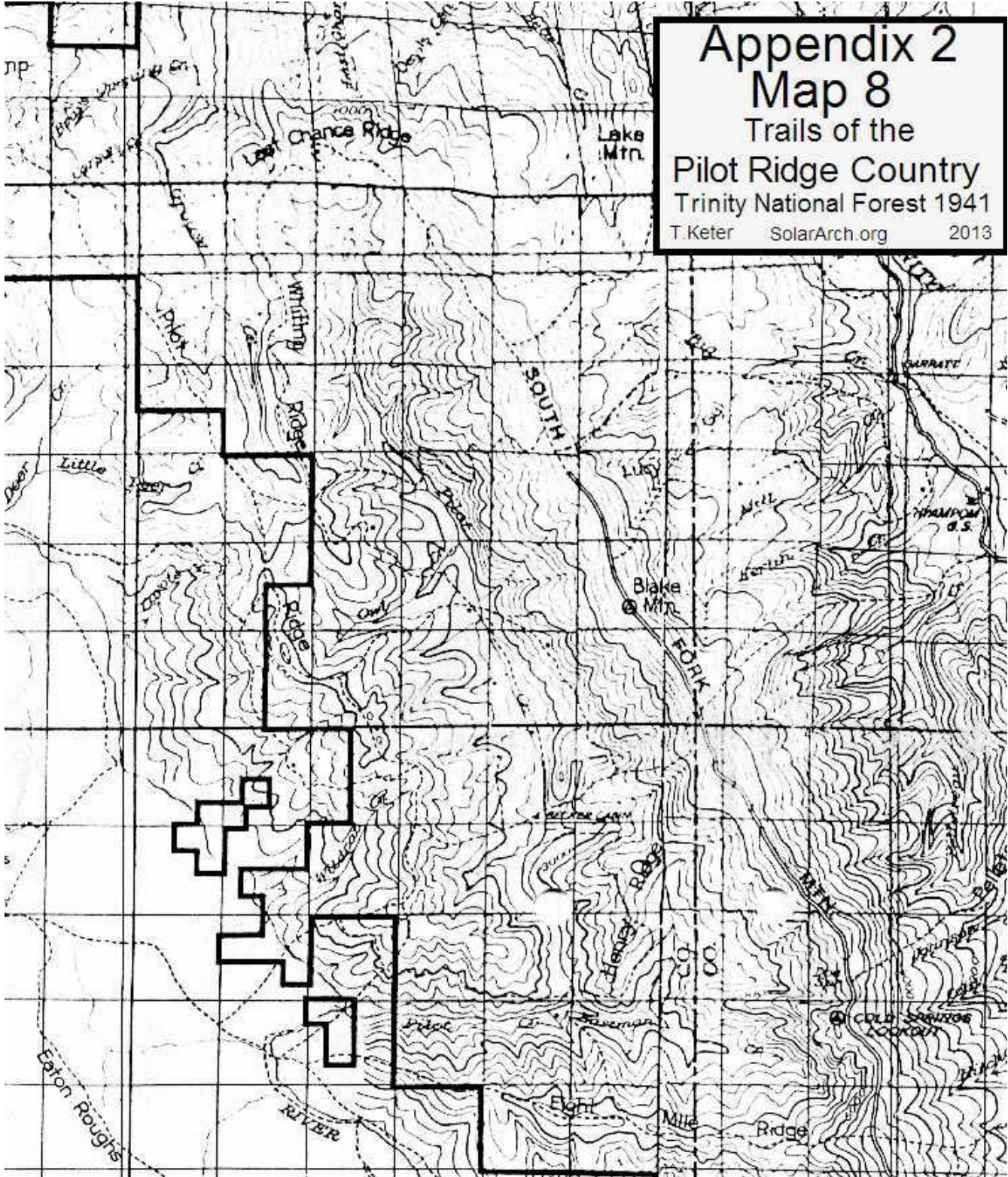
Appendix 2
Map 3
Trails of the
Pilot Ridge Country
Six Rivers National Forest 1947
T. Keter SolarArch.org 2013











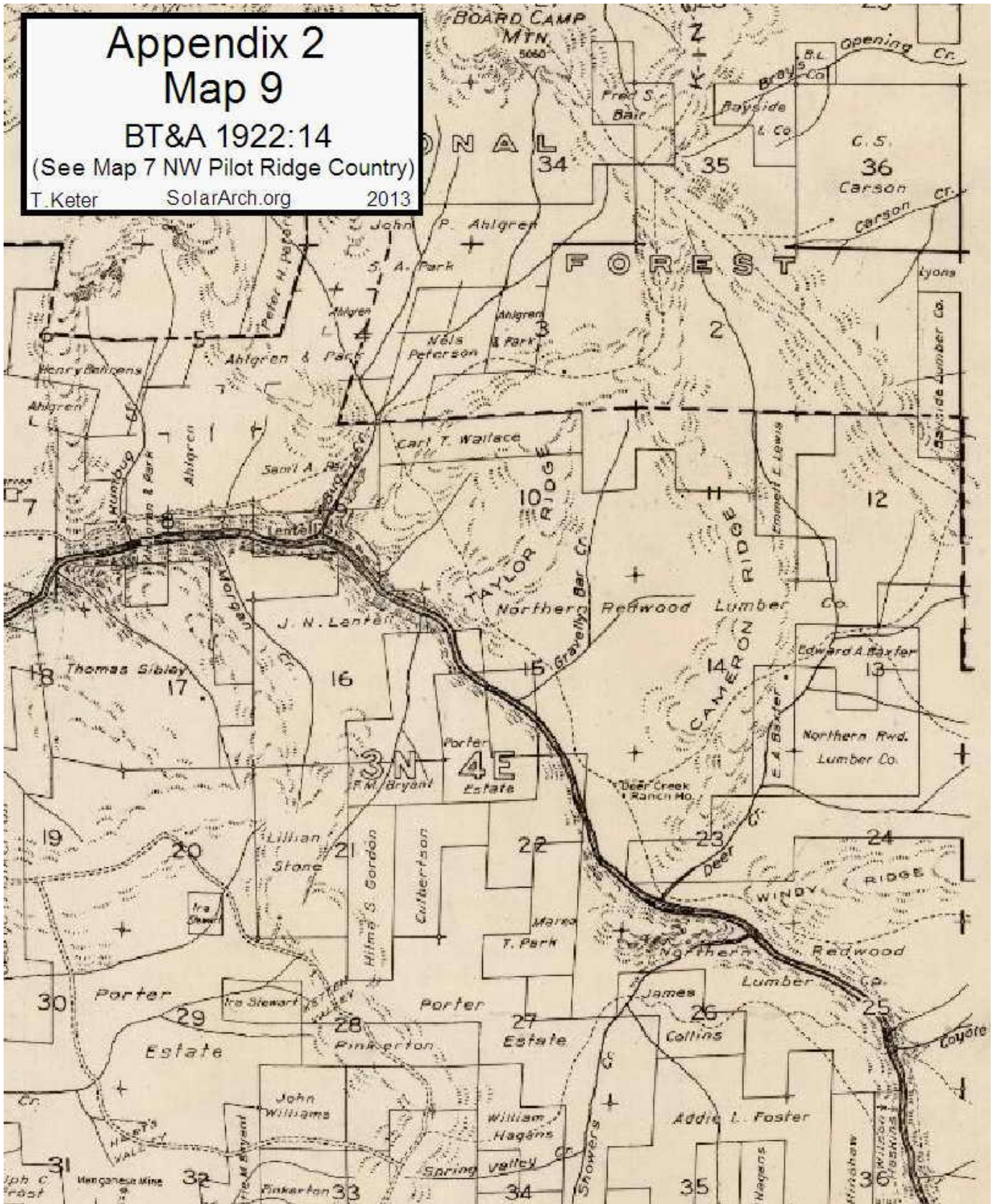
Appendix 2
Map 8
Trails of the
Pilot Ridge Country
Trinity National Forest 1941
T.Keter SolarArch.org 2013

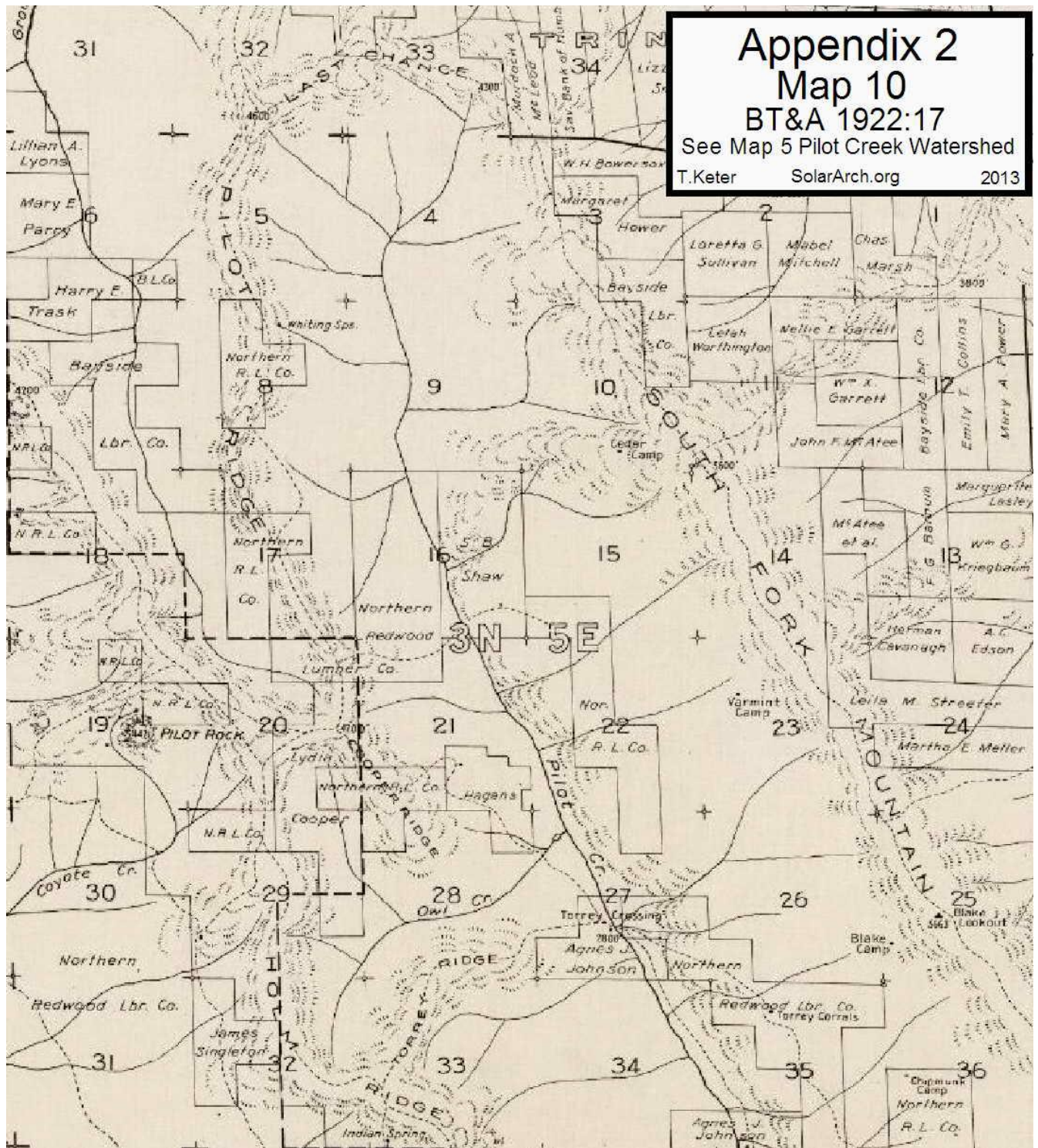
Appendix 2 Map 9

BT&A 1922:14

(See Map 7 NW Pilot Ridge Country)

T. Keter SolarArch.org 2013





Appendix 2 Map 11 BT&A 1922:16 See Map 3 Pilot Creek Watershed
 T.Keter SolarArch.org 2013

