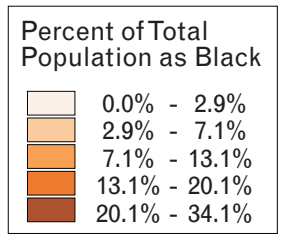


# Kentucky's Segregated Parks and 1930 Black Population

In 1942, Henry Ward, a congress person from Paducah, drafted a law in the Kentucky legislature that segregated urban park systems in five of Kentucky's largest cities. The law mandated that, "all public parks established and maintained for the recreation, pleasure and welfare of the colored population shall be held, managed and controlled by a Colored Park Board of Commissioners of the city wherein the parks are located." Although many cities across the Commonwealth had segregated parks prior to 1942, Henry Ward's legislation was the first law under segregation that gave power and resources to black communities to organize and develop recreation and leisure programs appropriate for black communities. Louisville was excluded from this law, although the city had segregated parks. The largest black park in Louisville was Chickasaw Park, established in the 1920's. All of the largest black urban parks, Chickasaw in Louisville, Stuart Nelson in Paducah, and Lexington's Douglass Park still exist today.

Source: 1930 U.S. Census



After opening Kenlake State Resort Park on Kentucky Lake in the mid-1940s, the State Parks Department built Cherokee State Resort Park a few miles down shore. With a beach, a boat house, twelve cottages, a restaurant, and a full-time staff of over 15 people, Cherokee State Resort Park was the first and only black resort park in Kentucky. A 1952 Kentucky State Highway map touted the park as the finest 'colored' vacation site in the South. Cherokee closed during integration in the 1950's, to the disappointment of many black communities. Kenlake remained open and received cottages from Cherokee. In 1998 the Murray State University Sculling Team renovated the property to house the Team's trophies. The renovation did not include any historical recognition of this unique park.

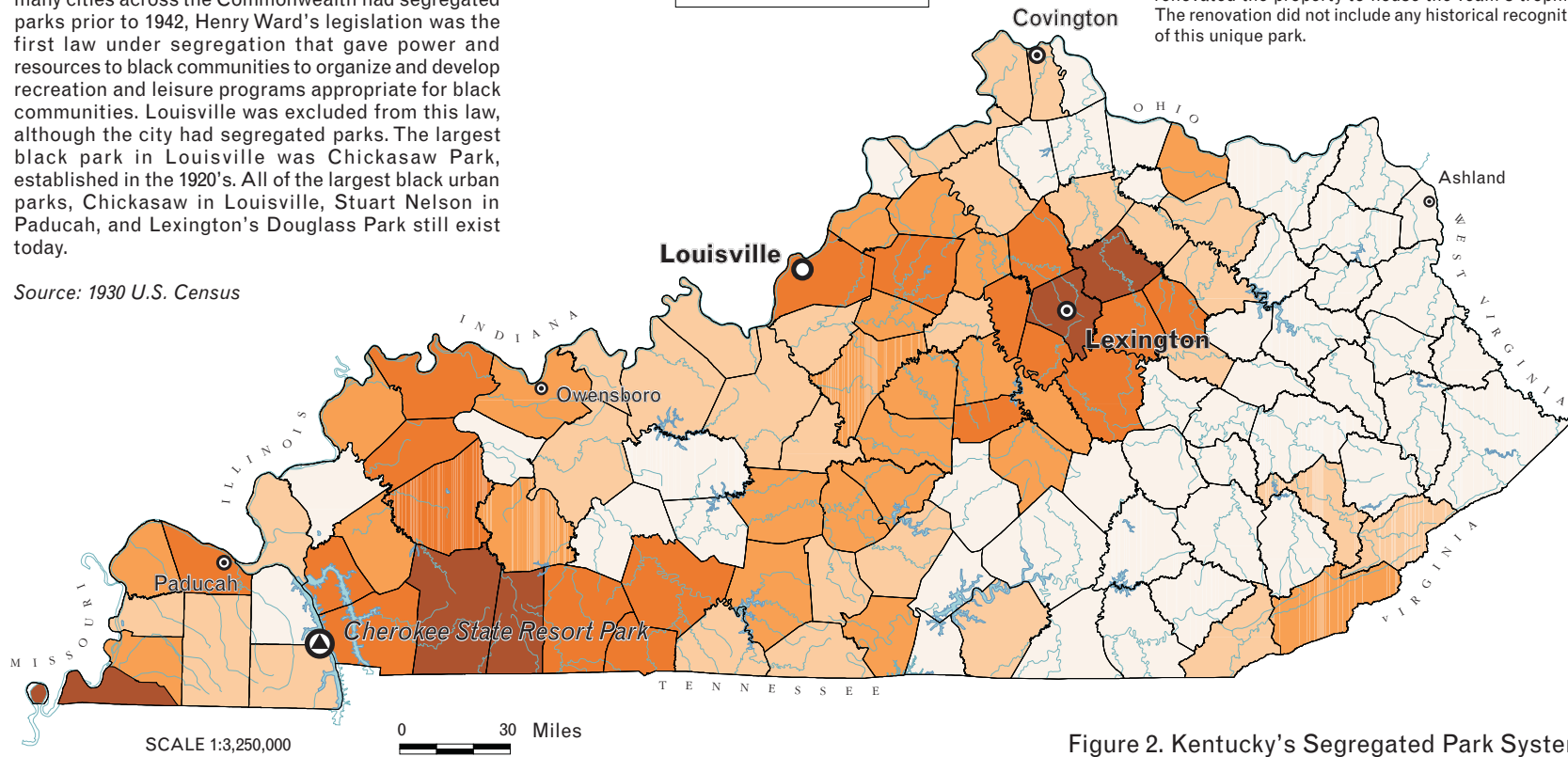


Figure 2. Kentucky's Segregated Park Systems