

The origins of the principal
dialect areas in the US, and the
persistence of these areas to the
present day

Ling 113 Fall 2005-- Selkirk

9/26-28/05

The New England Yankees came in family groups from southeastern England

The character of the initial migration gave New England settlers a unique opportunity to fashion an orderly society. Most of the immigrants, some 21,000, came in a cluster (from the southeast of England, Essex and Norfolk), a movement of families from the middling ranks of English society known as “the Great Migration.” (Labov 2005)

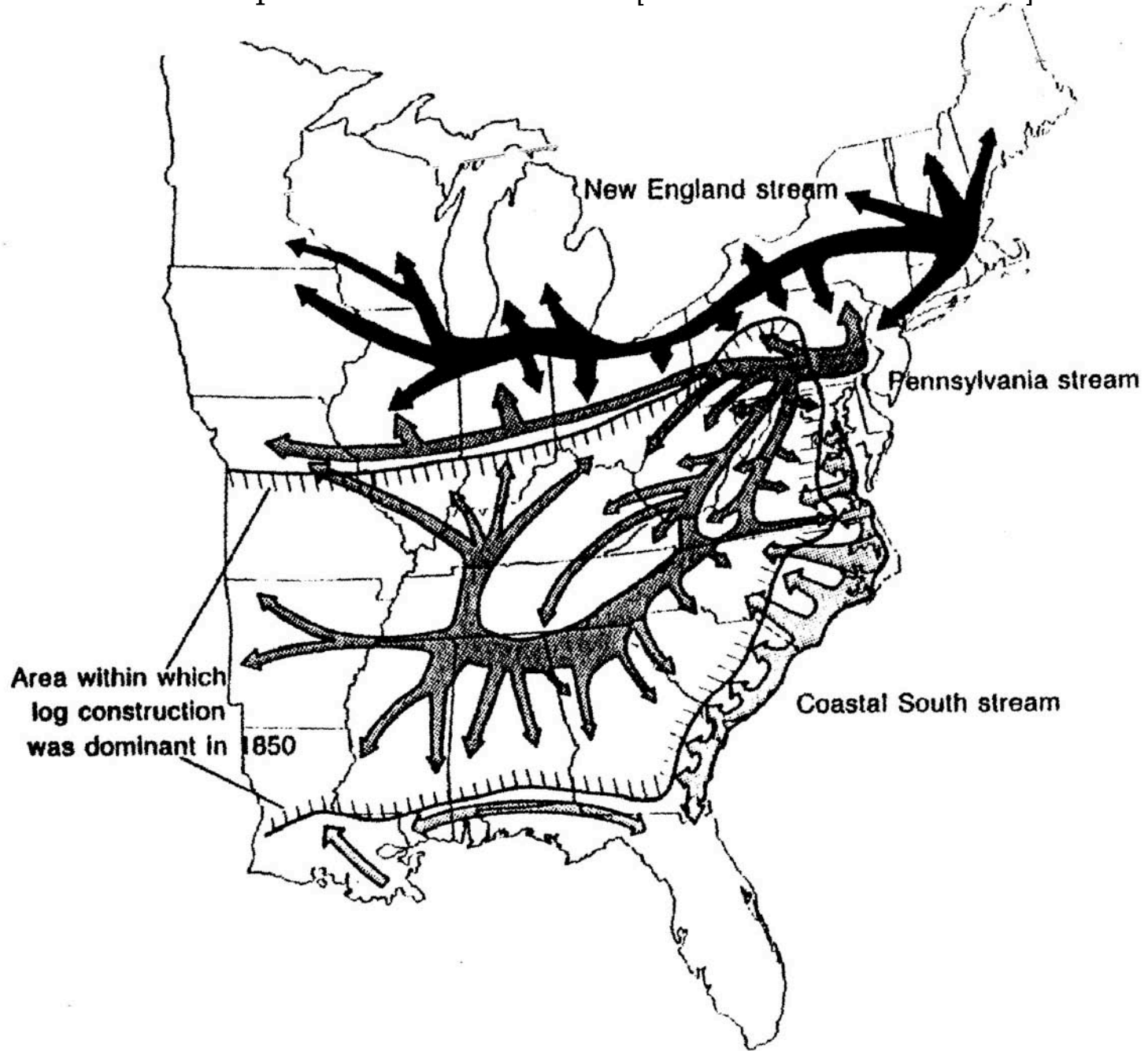
Colonial Pennsylvania was settled by three very different groups

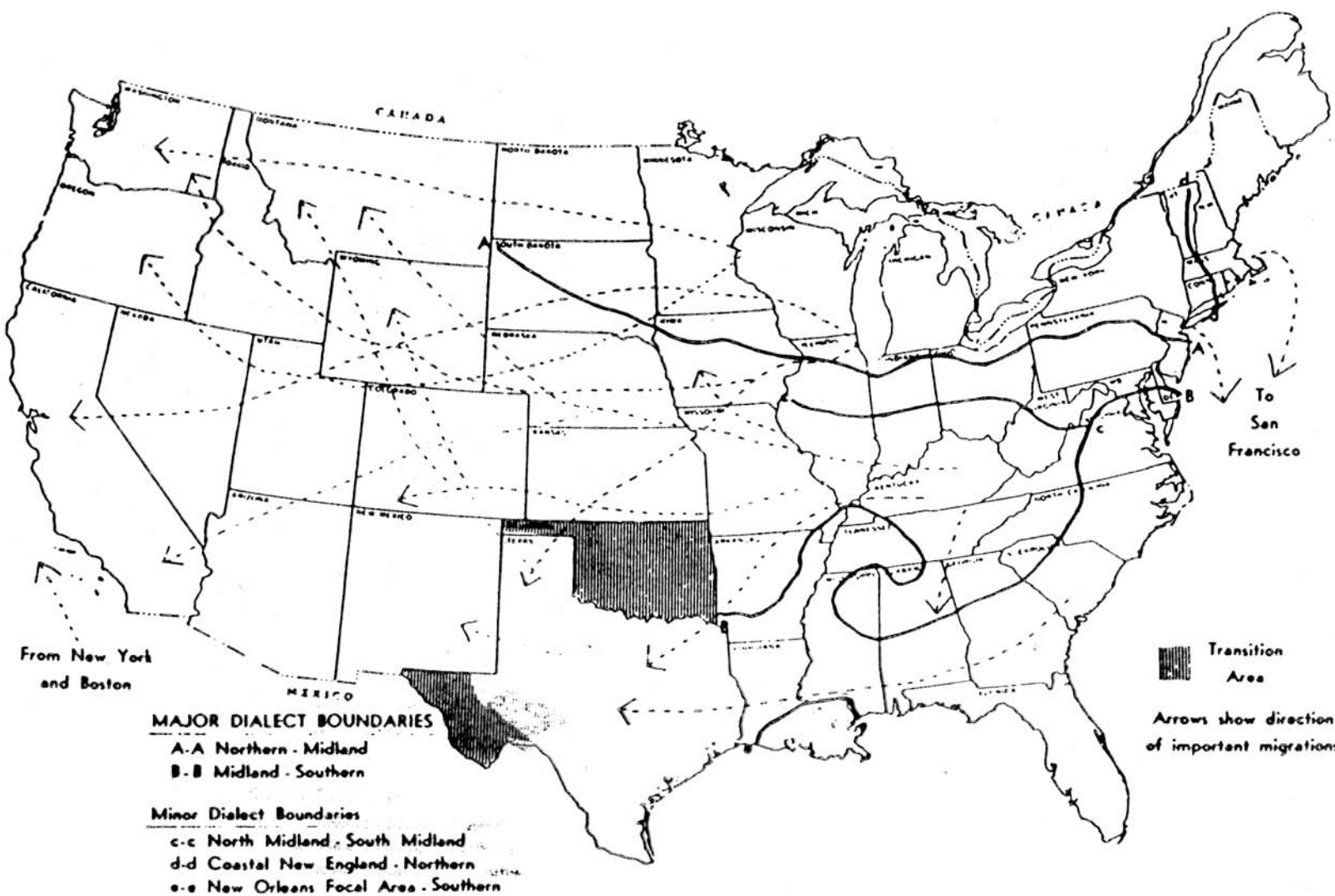
- Quakers-- from the North Country and the Midlands of England**
- Scots Irish-- protestants from Ulster in Ireland, originally from Scotland**
- Germans-- from the Rhineland (the “Pennsylvania Dutch”)**

Tidewater Virginia, like New England, had settlers from southeast England

- **Tidewater (coastal, lowland) Virginia saw the development of a plantation culture, rather than the small town/family farm development of New England.**
- **Richmond was the principal city of the Tidewater region**
- **Mountain Virginia was settled by Scots Irish and others, and had little direct interaction with the Tidewater region and culture**

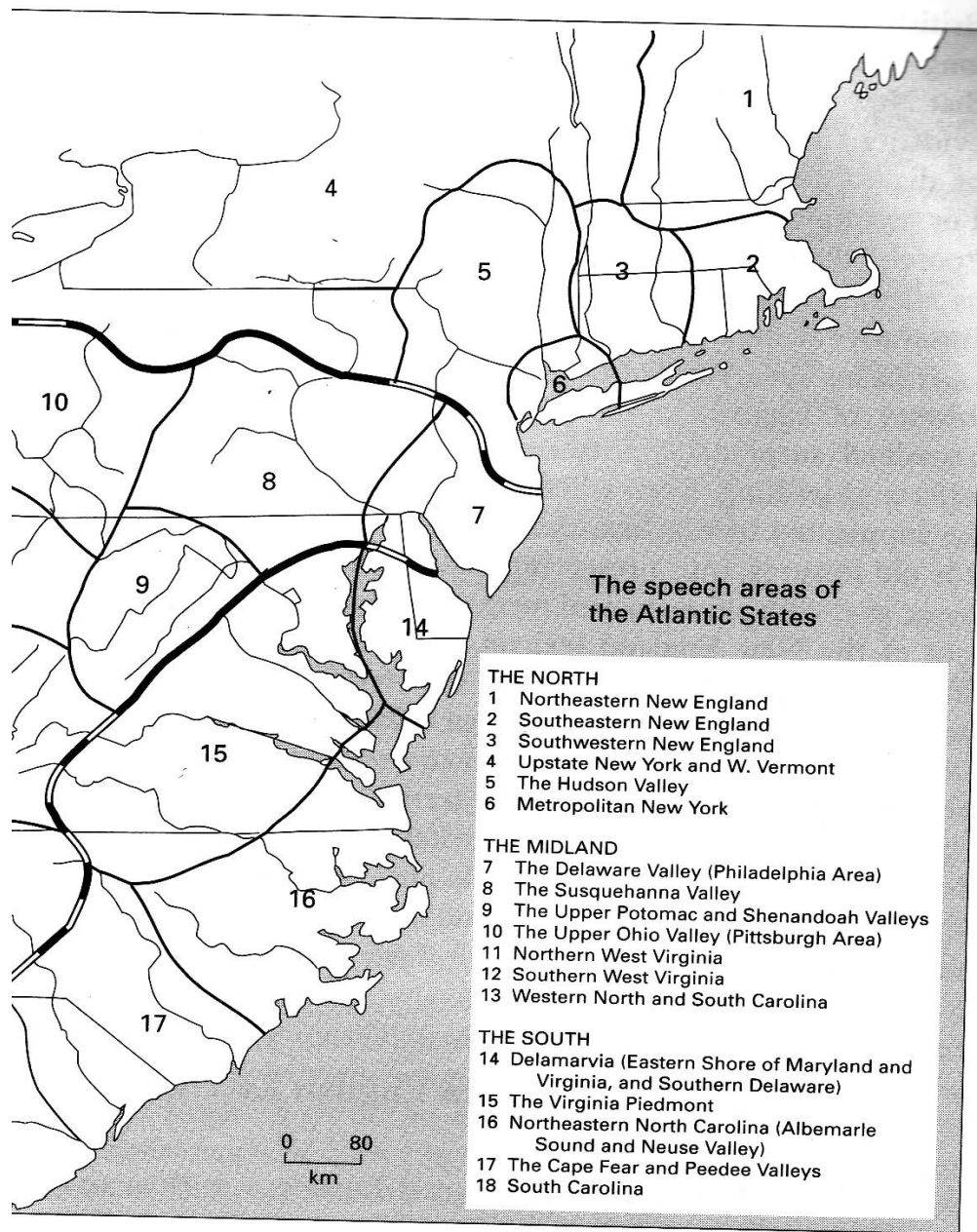
Settlement patterns of 1800-1850 [Glassie & Kniffen 1966]





**Reflection of early 1800's
settlement patterns in
boundaries between dialects:**

- **North**
- **Midland -- divided into northern and southern portions**
- **South**



Dialect areas of the Eastern United States: a traditional view (from Kurath 3; reprinted by permission of the University of Michigan Press)

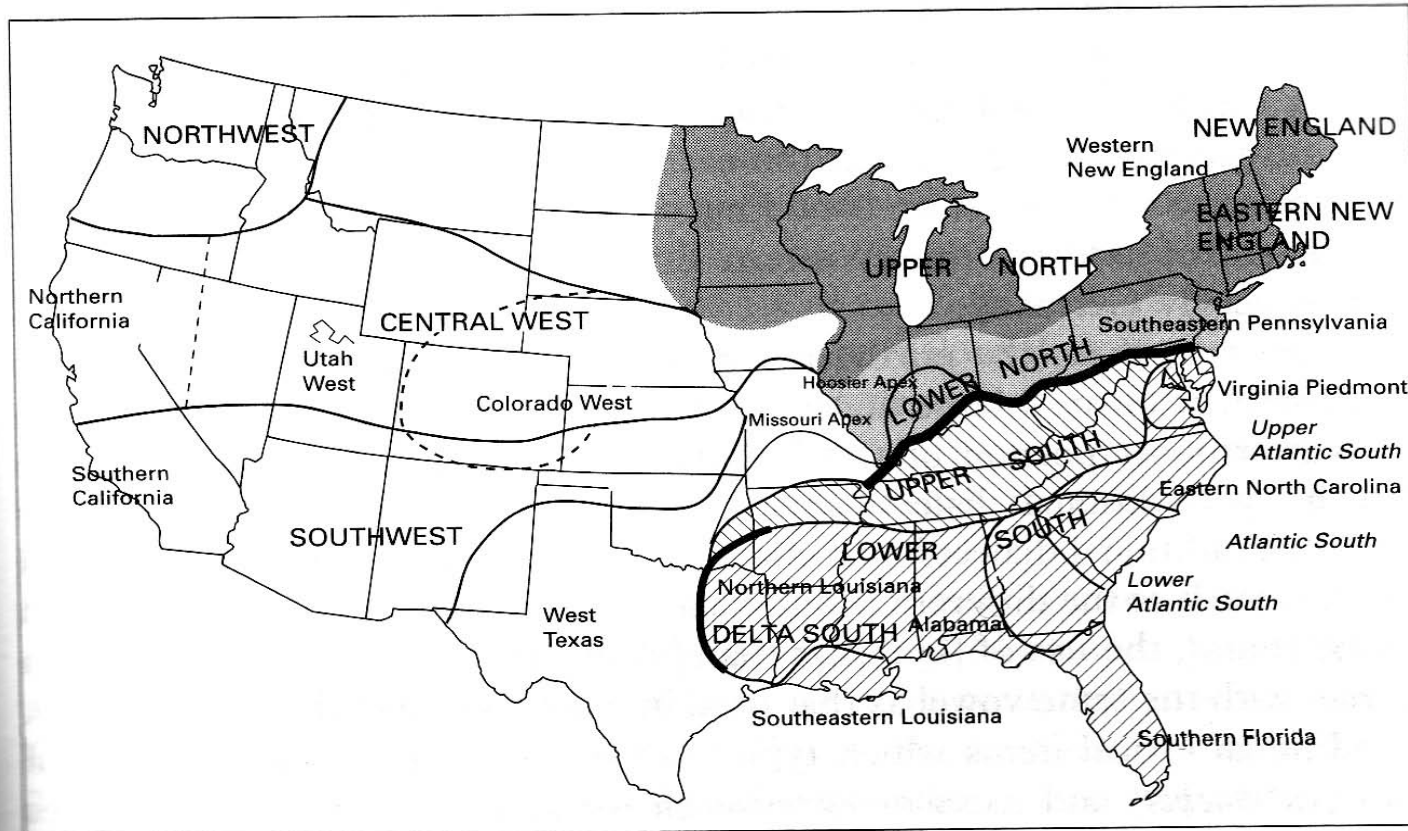
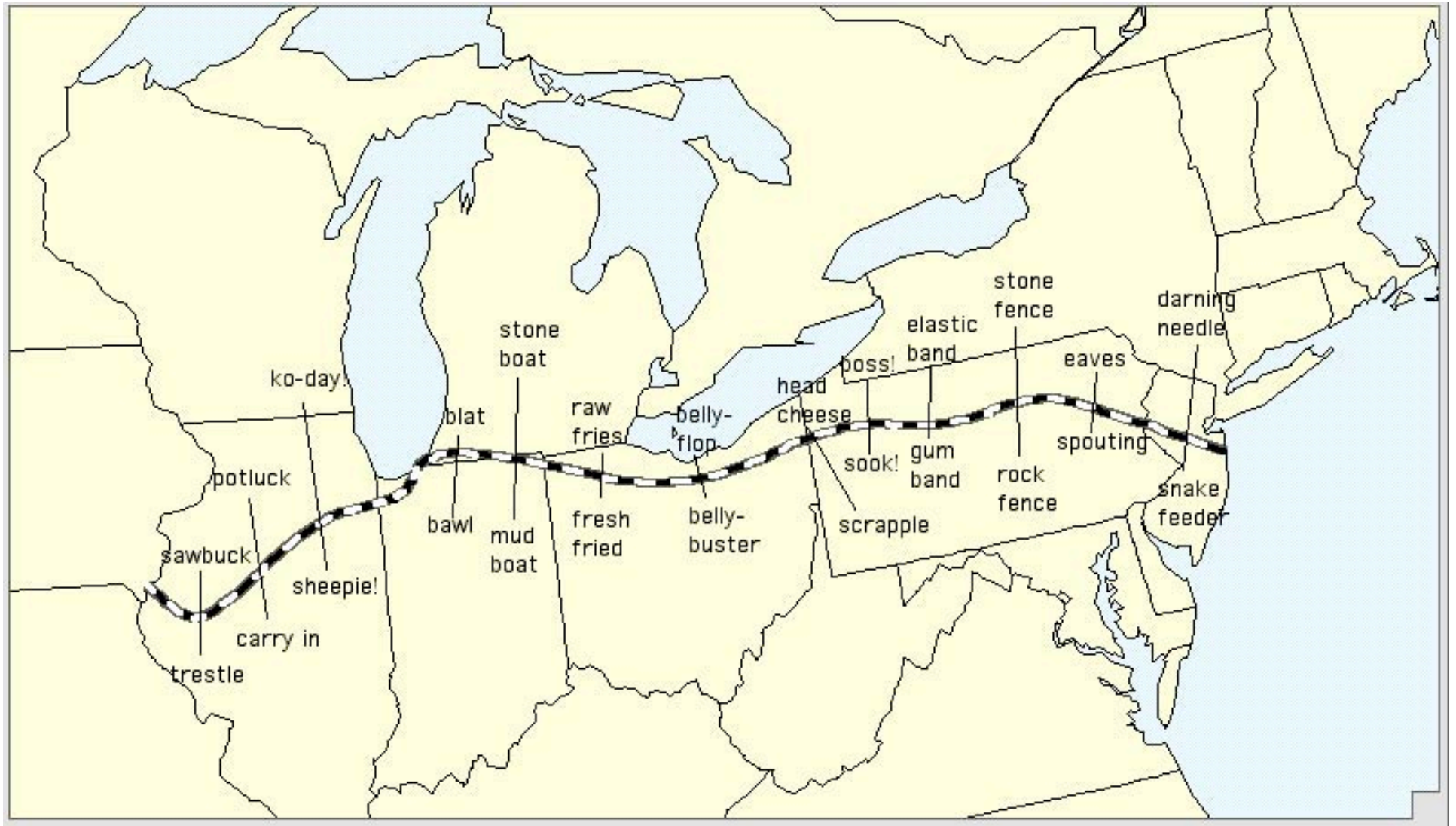


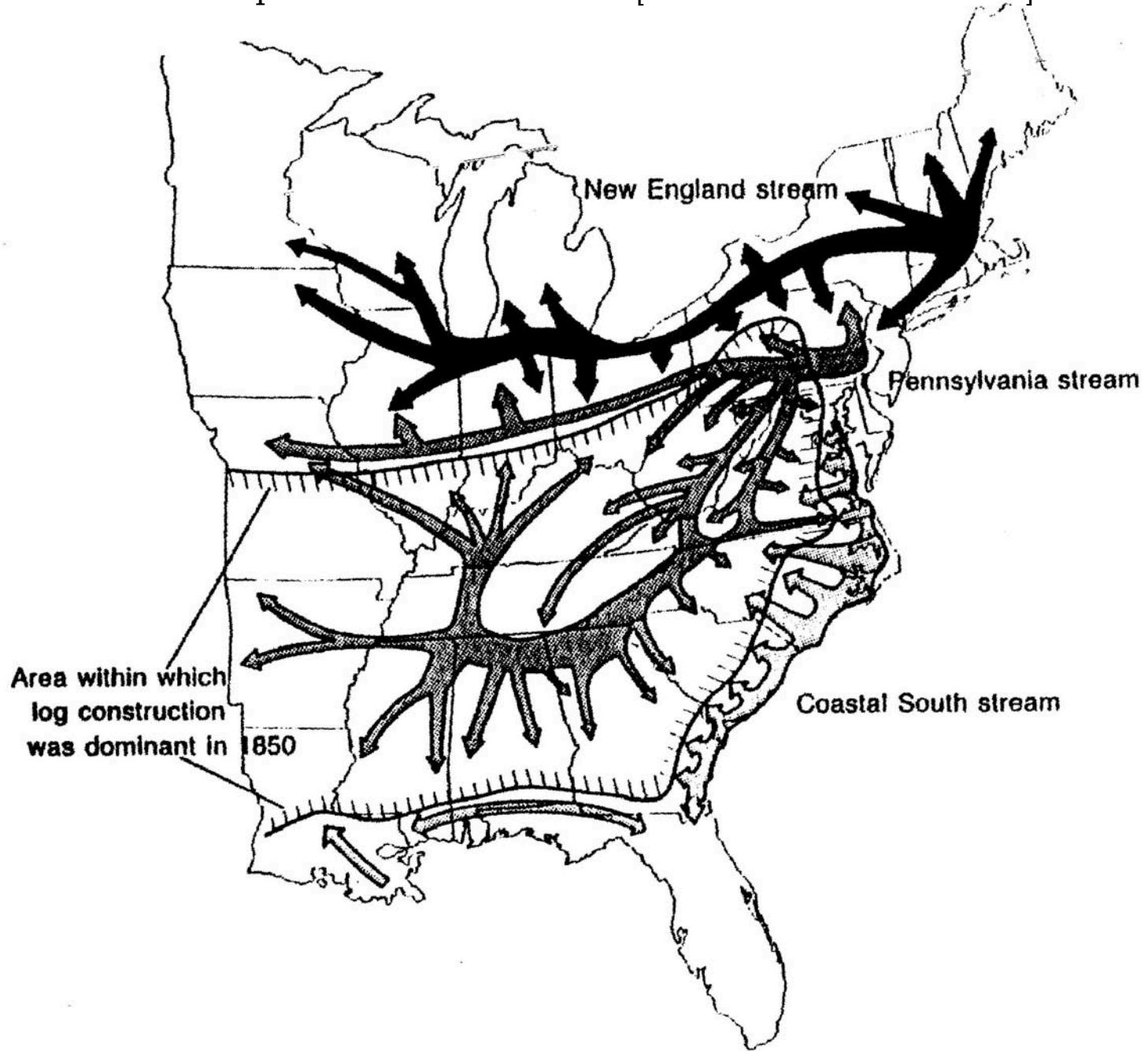
Figure 4.3 The major dialect areas of the United States: a revised perspective (from Carver 1987: 248; reprinted by permission of the University of Michigan Press)

The North/Midland lexical isogloss

(Labov LSA lectures 2005)



Settlement patterns of 1800-1850 [Glassie & Kniffen 1966]



The same dialect boundaries based on studies of the lexicon from the 1930's to the 1950's (maps above) are also seen in the results of the TELSUR study of pronunciation done in the mid 1990's (reported in *The Pronunciation of North American English*, Labov, Ash and Boberg 2005)

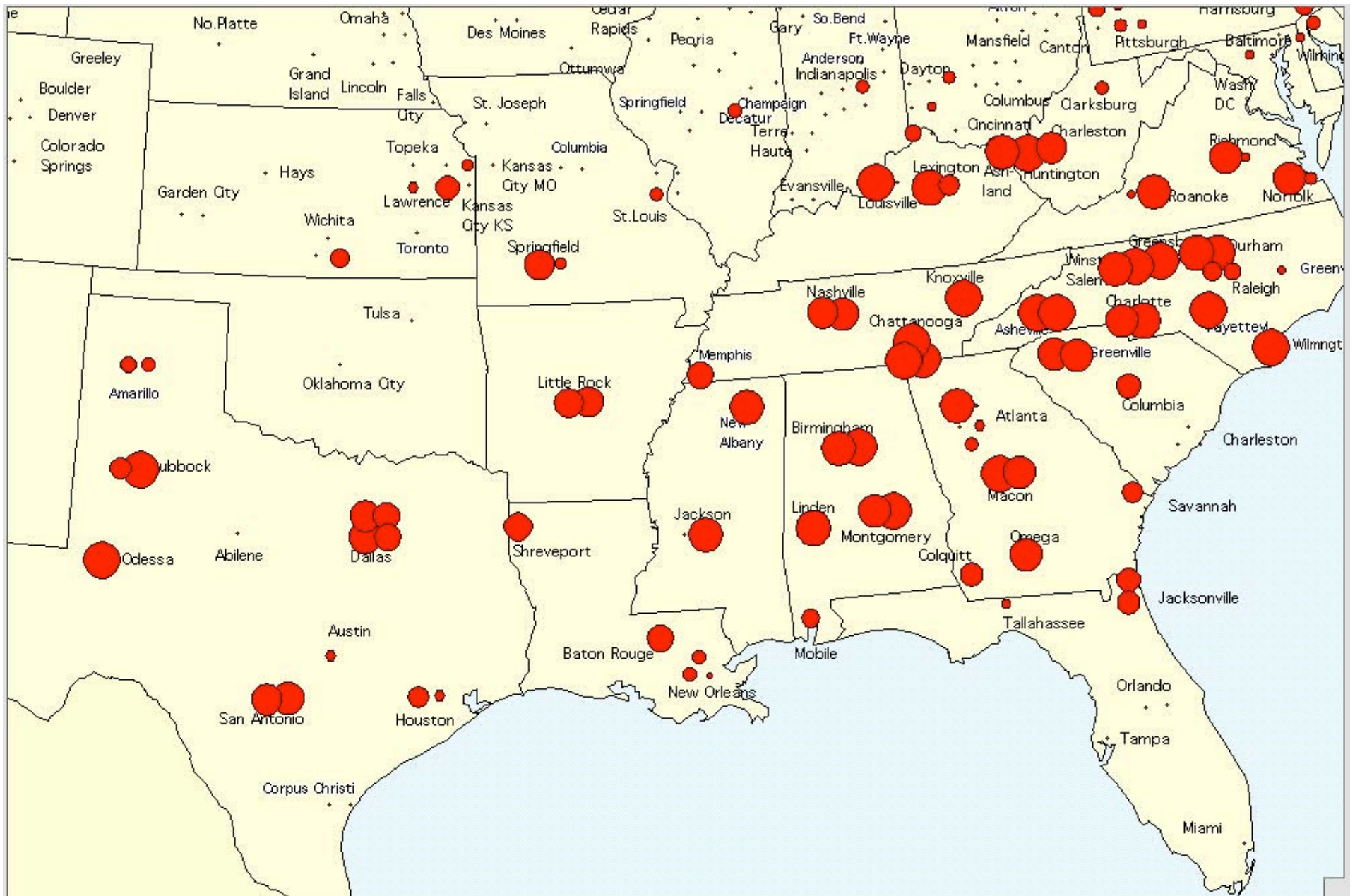
The AY/AA isogloss

Separates the North and the northern Midland from the southern Midland and the South

***I'm fine* =**

[aym fayn] vs. [aam faan]

Monophthongization of /ay/: thematic map



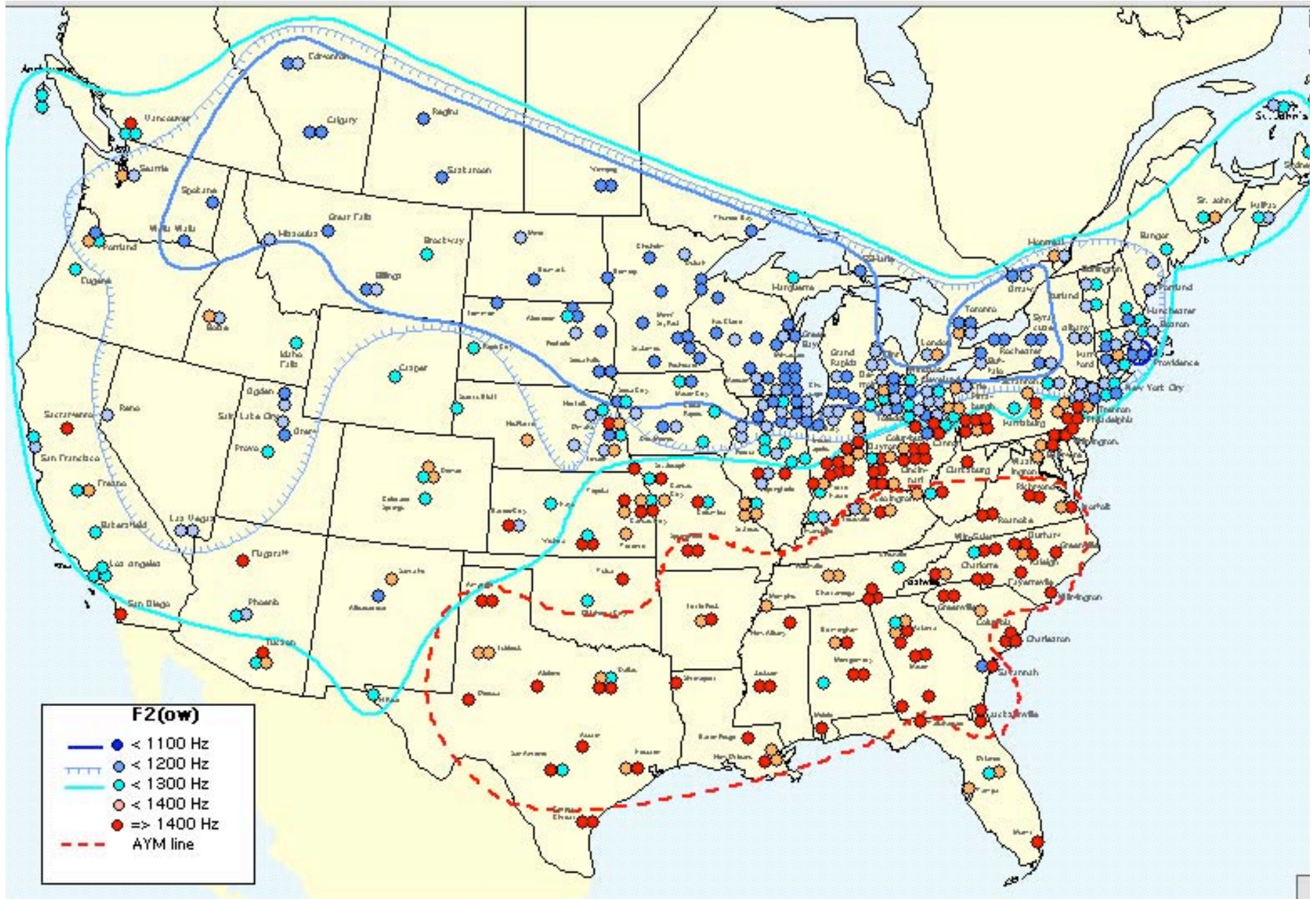
The ow/'w isogloss

**Separates the North from
the Midlands and the South**

***Go slow* =**

[gow slow] vs. [g'w sl'w]

Map 12.4 Fronting of /ow in North America/

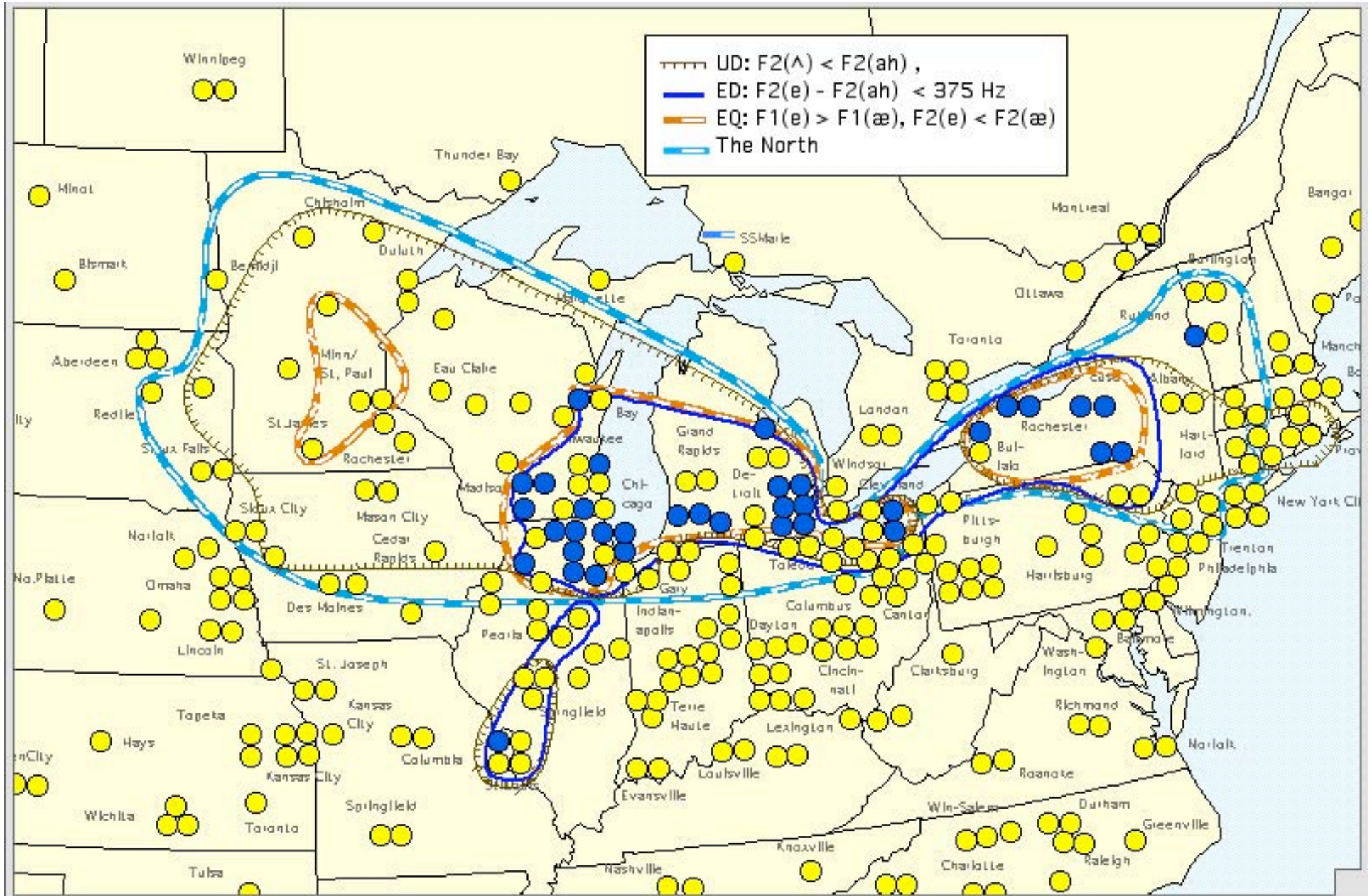


The Northern Cities Shift

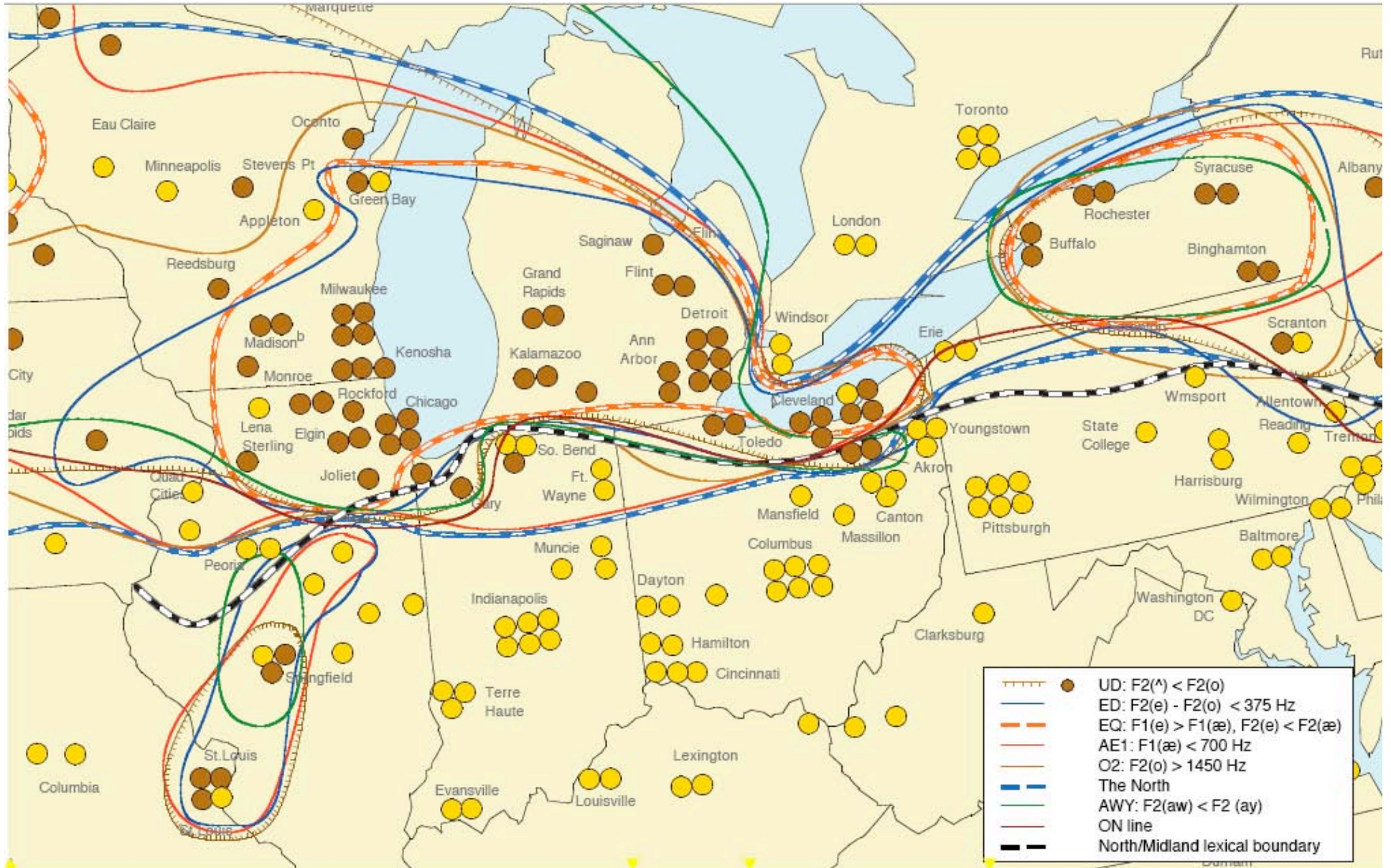
Only involves cities in the North, above the North-Midlands boundary (except for the Saint Louis corridor)

Cf. WSE (the textbook), p. 148

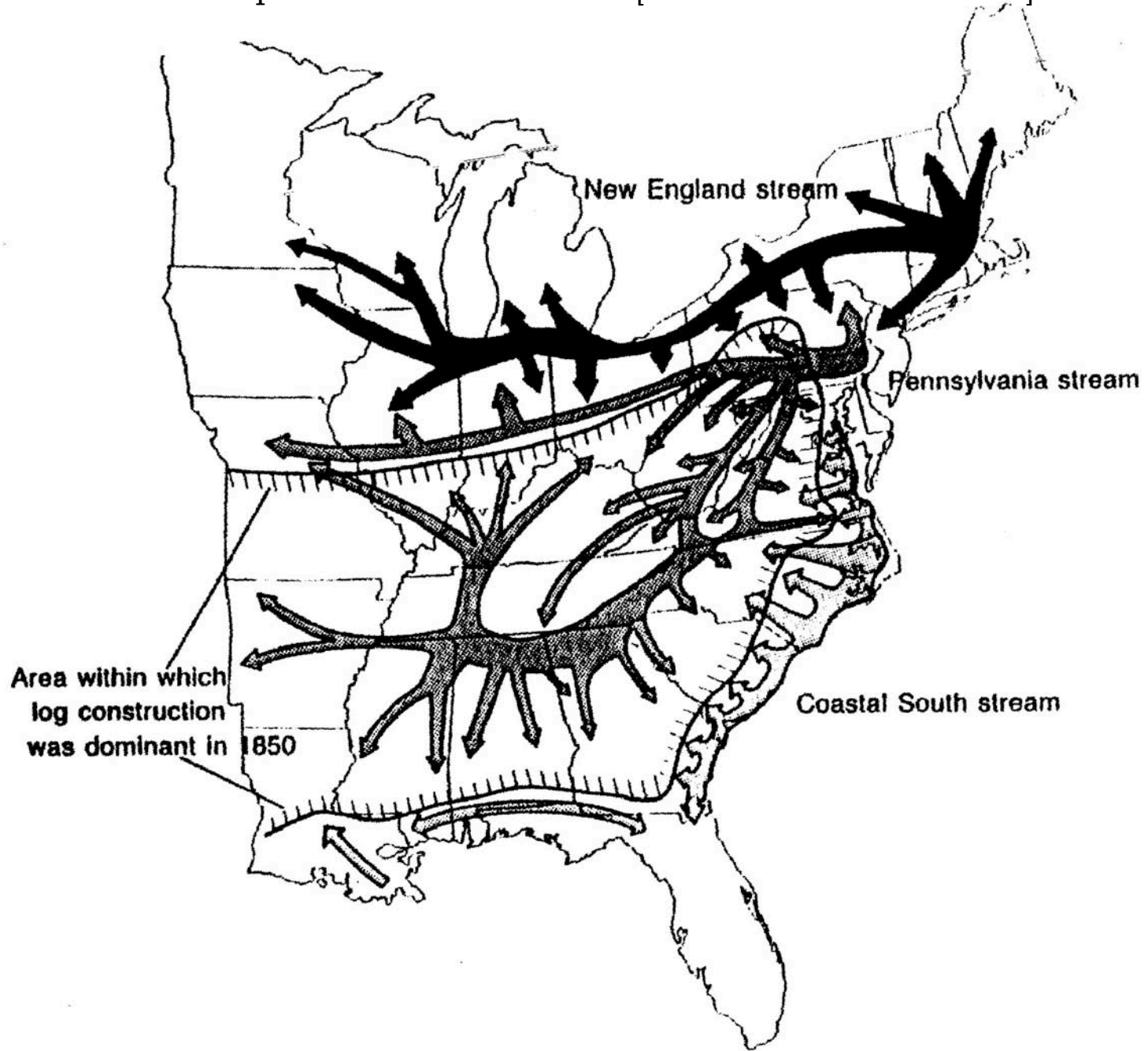
Speakers with all the defining features of the Northern Cities Shift



M14.11. The North/Midland isogloss bundle



Settlement patterns of 1800-1850 [Glassie & Kniffen 1966]



**The big question:
Why are these dialect boundaries
so persistent?**

Attitudes as a crucial factor:

What people think of other people, and of themselves in relation to them, is a big factor in whether they, as a group or individually, come to speak like others or speak differently from them.

:

Positive or negative evaluation of one group by another group can lead to positive or negative evaluation of the way the other group speaks.

Negative evaluations of each other by two groups can have the effect of maintaining linguistic differences

Positive evaluation by one group of another group can lead to the first group's changing features of their dialect by borrowing features from the second, "prestige", group.

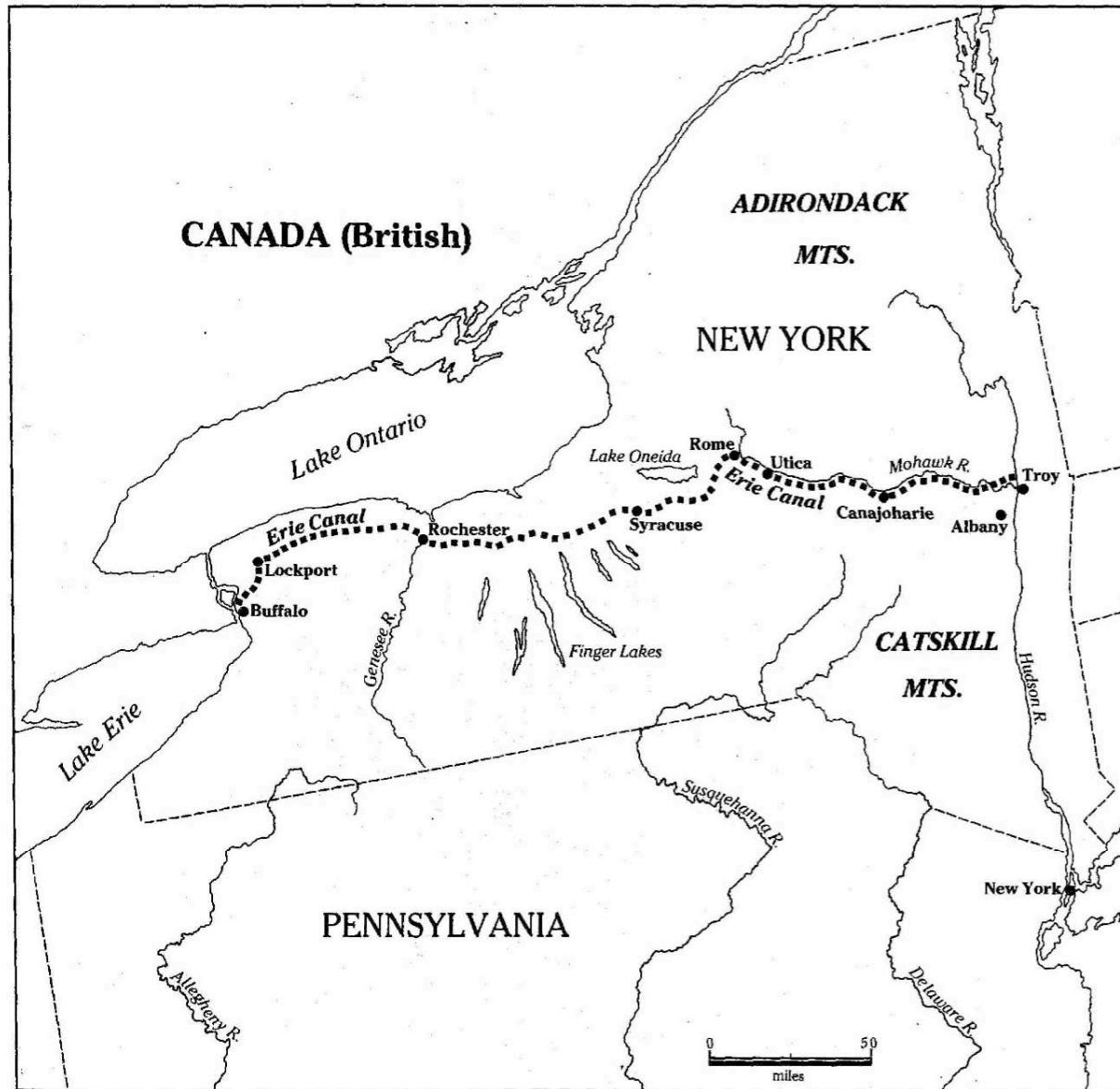
**Example One:
The maintenance of the North-Midland
dialect boundary**

**Labov 2005 claims that the North-Midland
boundary is maintained due to the
influence of :**

- (i) Yankee cultural imperialism (on the part
of the North)**
- (ii) Resistance to Yankee cultural
imperialism (on the part of the Midlands)**

A little more history....

The Erie Canal



4.3 THE ERIE CANAL: MAN-MADE RIVER TO THE WEST OPENED IN 1825

Community movement in the migration from New England

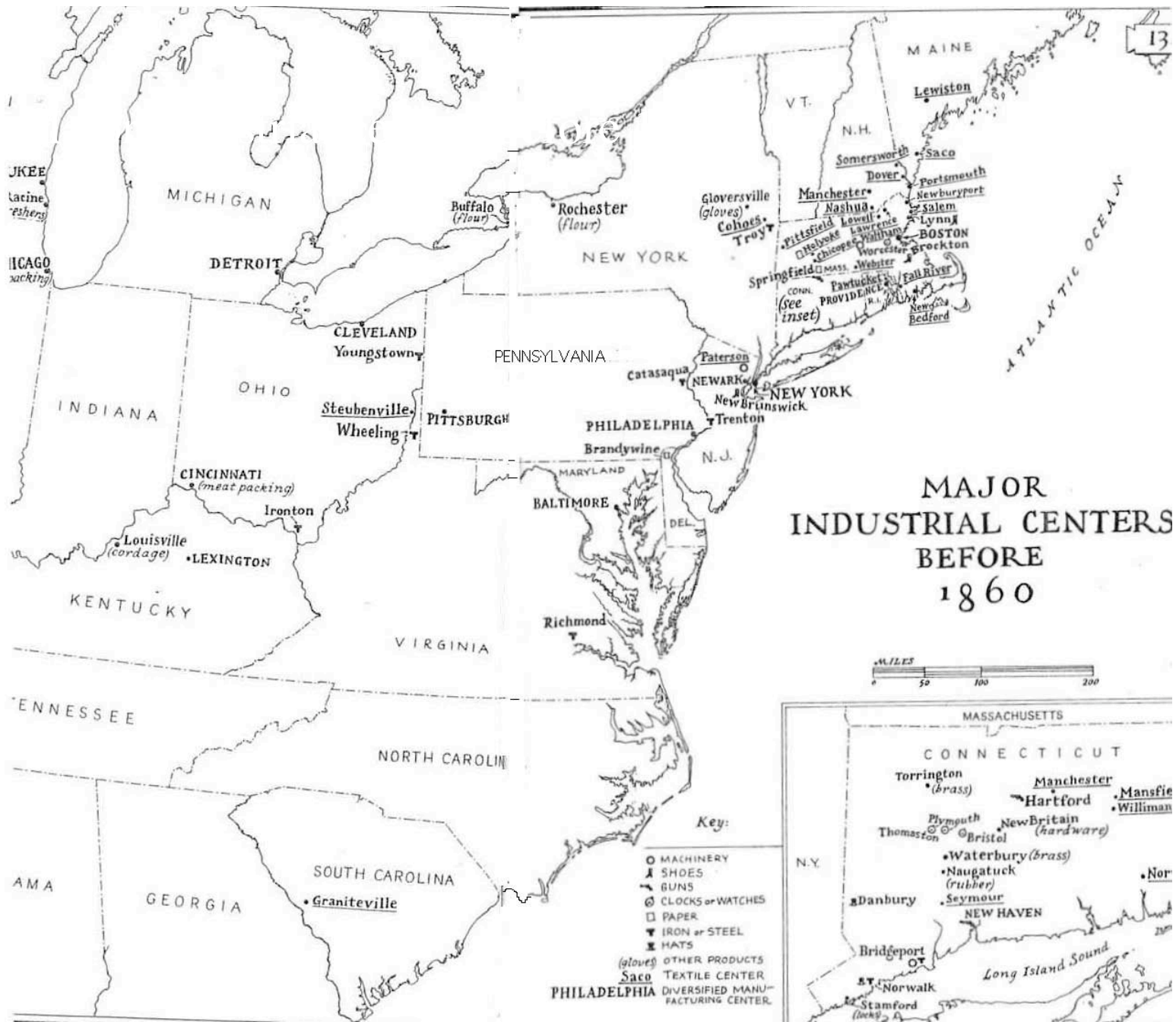
Mass migrations were indeed congenial to the Puritan tradition. Whole parishes, parson and all, had sometimes migrated from Old England. Lois Kimball Mathews mentioned 22 colonies in Illinois alone, all of which originated in New England or in New York, most of them planted between 1830 and 1840.

--Richard L. Power, *Planting Corn Belt Culture: The Impress of the Upland Southerner and Yankee in the old Northwest*, 1953. P. 14.

Correcting Midland speech patterns

At Greensburg in southeastern Indiana, the Reverend J. R. Wheelock advised his eastern sponsors that his wife had opened a school of 20 or 30 scholars in which she would use “the most approved N.E. school books,” to be obtained by a local merchant from Philadelphia. “She makes defining a distinct branch of study and this gives her a very favorable oppy. of correcting the children & thro’ them, the parents of ‘a heap’ of Kentuckyisms.”

--Richard L. Power, *Planting Corn Belt Culture: The Impress of the Upland Southerner and Yankee in the old Northwest*, 1953, P. 114.



--Atlas of American History. 2nd rev. ed. Scribner's, 1984

The North as culturally and economically dominant 1850's-1960's

- Commitment to broad-based public education at all levels-- an inheritance of Puritan values
- A thriving industrial economy

Tim Frazer,
“The language of Yankee Cultural Imperialism”

...we must learn what led to the establishment of Inland Northern as a prestige dialect in the Great Lakes region; we need to understand as well why scholars like Kenyon, George Phillip Krapp and Hans Kurath...embraced the concept of Inland Northern as a General American.”

Perhaps the language of “Yankee cultural imperialism” was appropriate for a century of corporate expansion, leveraged buyouts, and American military intervention in the Philippines, Central America, the Caribbean, Vietnam, and the Middle East.

from “*Heartland*” *English.*, ed. T. Frazer, U. of Alabama Press, 1993.Pp. 60, 66.

Part II: Changes in pronunciation within the major dialect areas

- The story of *r*: *r*-vocalization (= “*r*-dropping”) and later restoration of *r*. (Example Two of the role for attitudes)
- Next week: The Northern Cities Shift and the Southern Cities Shift. (?Additional examples of the role for attitudes?)

What is *r*-vocalization?

Examples:

barn [baan]

car [kaa]

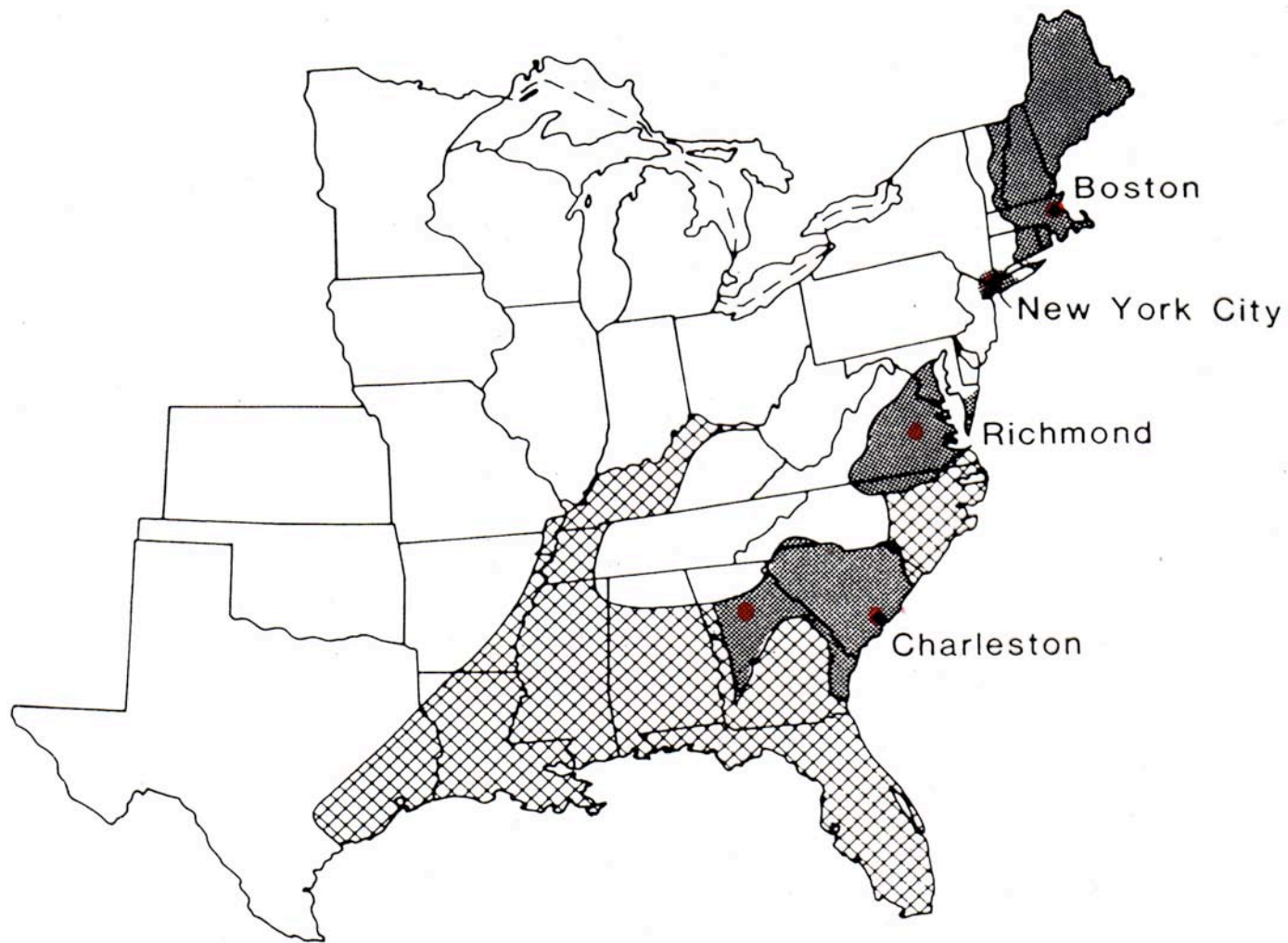
four [fow´]

care [key´]

The story of *r*

Stage one

- There was no *r*-vocalization in the speech of the American colonists (1600's-1700's)
- Introduction of *r*-vocalization took hold by the 1800's in the following cities: Boston, Providence, New York, Richmond, Charleston, Savannah, Atlanta
- What explains this change?



Primary areas of \underline{r} -lessness



Diffusion of \underline{r} -lessness with the plantation system

FIGURE 11. Regions Lacking Postvocalic *r*

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- Philadelphia is the exception that proves the rule: as a port city it also had commercial relations with London, but its Quaker establishment apparently rejected London as a model

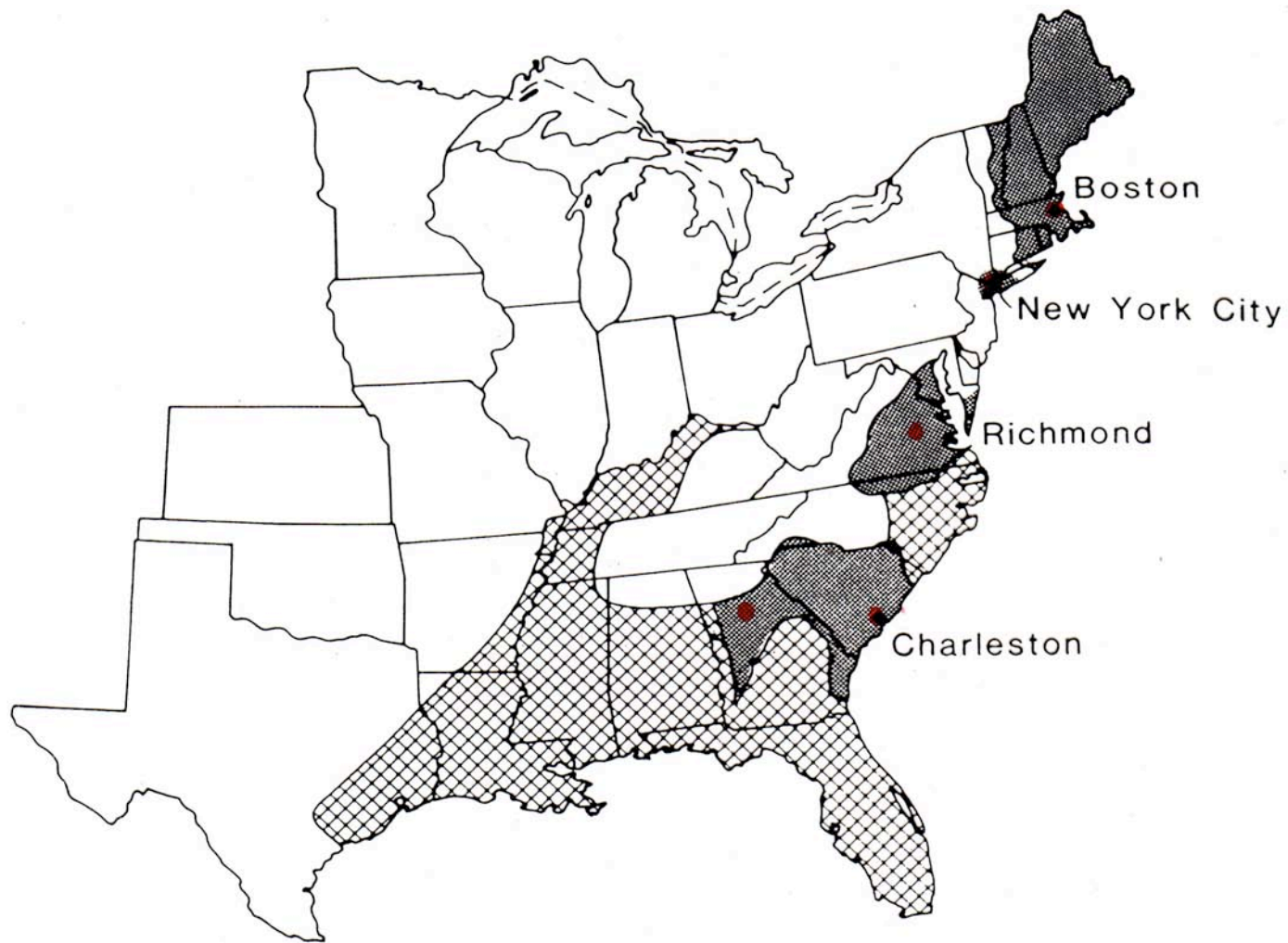
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- Summary: changes that were involved in the borrowing of the system of *r*-vocalization in the dialect of Boston, New York, Richmond, etc., are arguably the consequence of the positive evaluation of London and its speech

The story of *r*

Stage Two

- *r*-vocalization spreads out from the “ports of entry” to neighboring regions during the 1800’s
- The regions affected by spreading of *r*-vocalization have either a historic connection with the regional port city through settlement patterns (New England) or a strong commercial and cultural connection (the plantation South)



Primary areas of \underline{r} -lessness

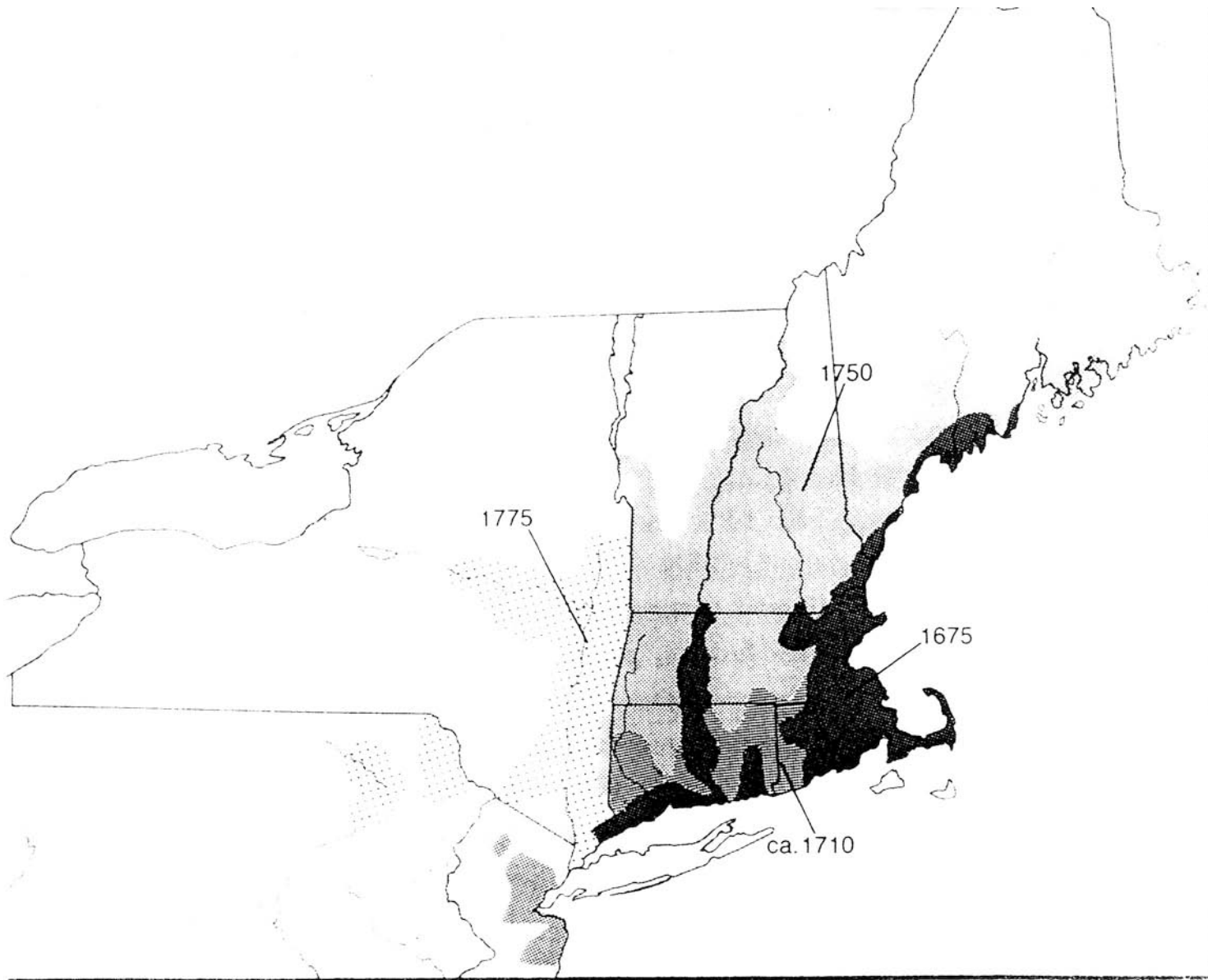


Diffusion of \underline{r} -lessness with the plantation system

FIGURE 11. Regions Lacking Postvocalic *r*

The distribution of *r*-vocalization in New England

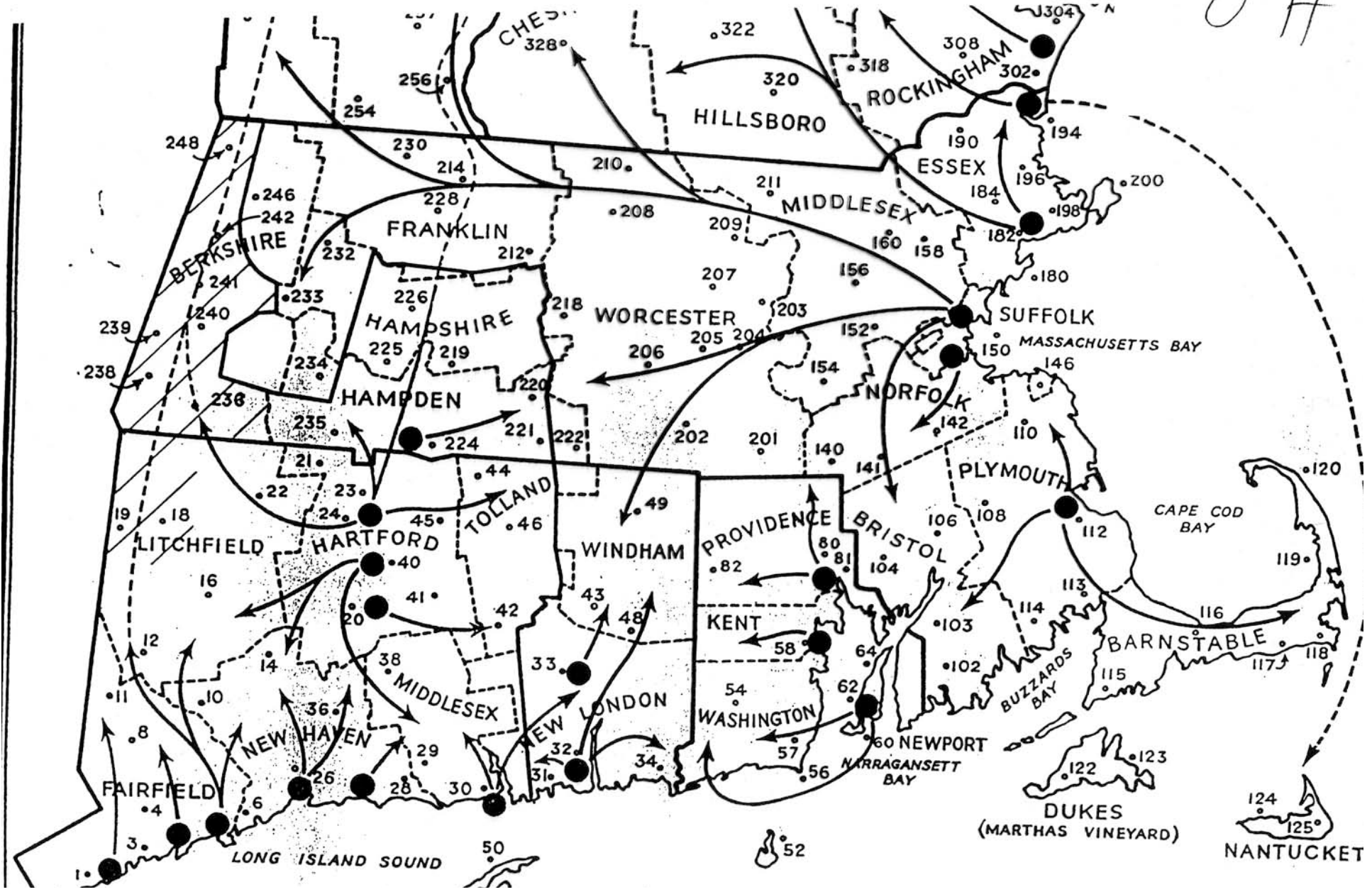
- Follows historical settlement patterns
- Corresponds to local commercial trade networks as well
- Affects all classes of society
- What was the mechanism for this change? Just how did it proceed?
- Western New England is unaffected. Why?

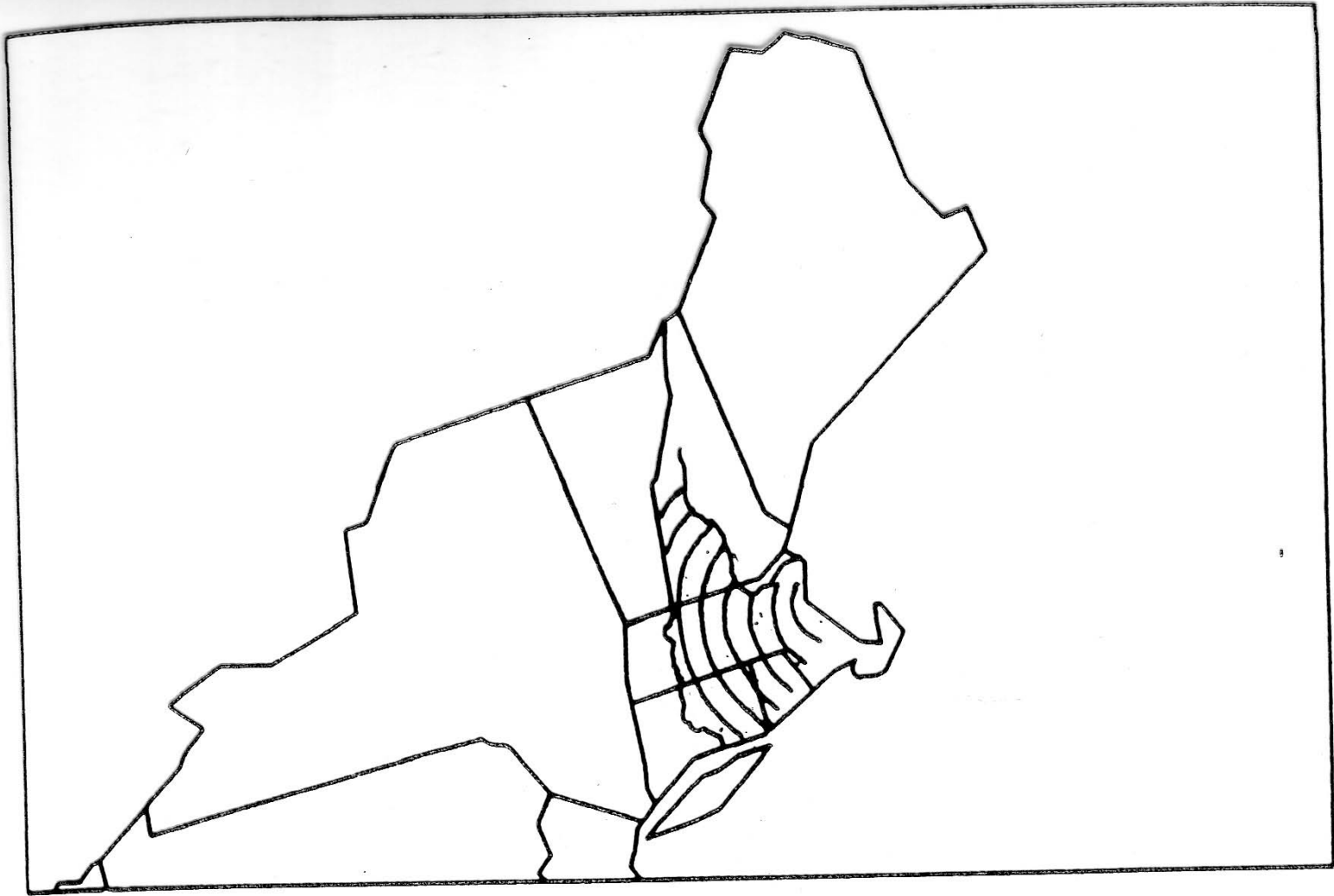


2.2. New England Expansion of Settlement to 1775

From Craig M. Carver. 1987. *American Regional Dialects: A Word Geography*. Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press.

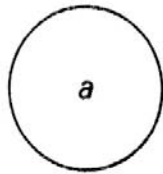
OH



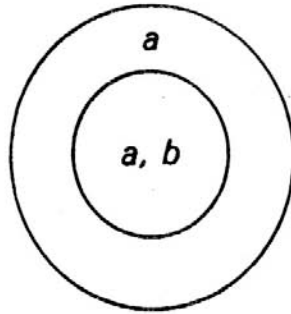


Dialect Spread in Eastern New England

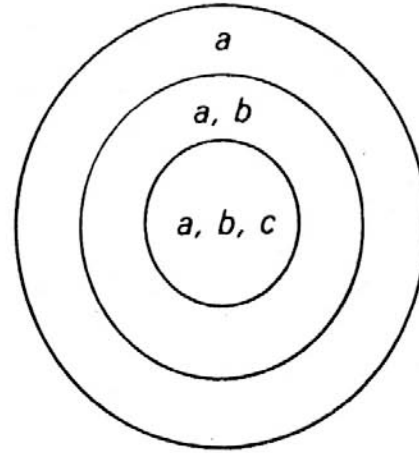
Wave Spread



Time i



Time ii



Time iii

So why didn't *r*-vocalization
come to Western Mass?

The spread of *r*-vocalization from New York City

- In the 1800's *r*-vocalization affects the areas immediately surrounding New York, including New Jersey and Long Island, but does not make inroads into the Hudson Valley and beyond. Why??
- In the areas affected, the dialect of people of all classes comes to include *r*-vocalization.

The spread of *r*-vocalization in the plantation South (pre-Civil War)

- Richmond, Charleston, Savannah and Atlanta were the cultural and commercial centers of the parts of the South with plantation economies
- The spread of *r*-vocalization from these cities throughout the lowland plantation South suggests that the speech of plantation owners (who had the greatest mobility and opportunity for contact) came to include *r*-vocalization, as did presumably the speech of slaves on the plantations

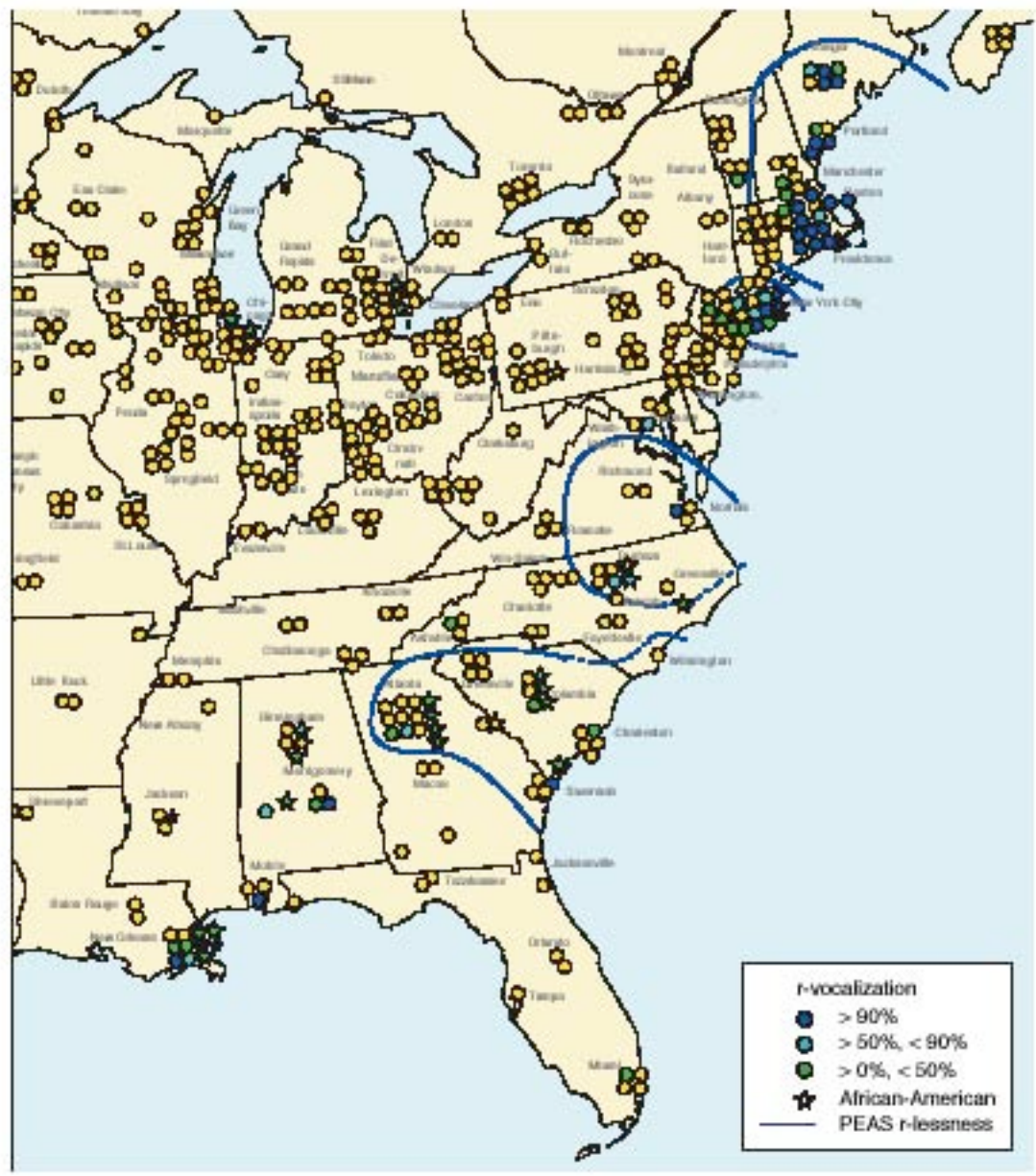
The spread of *r*-vocalization in the plantation South

- There is some question whether this prestige pronunciation spread beyond the upper classes and their slaves and their descendants.
- There are reports that *lack* of *r*-vocalization was negatively stereotyped as a feature of lower class white speech. I don't know (yet) whether lower class whites in the lowland South lacked *r*-vocalization.
- Whites in the nonplantation, upland mountainous South had always had *r*-full pronunciation. People from these areas (negatively stereotyped as "hillbillies") were poorer and less educated, and so were perhaps the source of the negative evaluation of lack of *r*-vocalization.

The story of *r*

Stage Three

- In the last half a century, *r* -vocalization has lost its status as a prestige pronunciation.
- Up through the 1930's manuals of speech diction, acting manuals, etc. taught *r*-vocalization, but things changed after World War II.
- The loss of prestige status for *r* -vocalization has led to an overall change in the dialect of the lowland South, and to a bidialectalism in New York and New England.



Map 7.1. *r*-vocalization in the eastern United States

Changes in the South

- In former historic areas of *r*-vocalization in the South, *r*-vocalization is now a feature only of the speech of older white speakers and of African Americans.
- In other words, loss of *r*-vocalization is an active change in progress, but affecting only white speakers.
- What could explain this pattern of change?

The Upland South as the new area of prestige

- The upland, inland, South has undergone very strong economic development in recent decades, reversing the historic patterns of economic power and influence in the South.
- The dialect of the upland South has never had *r*-vocalization.
- The loss of *r*-vocalization in younger speakers of the lowland South may be the result of a new prestige assigned to the speech of the upland South, due to the new prestige of the upland South itself.
- African Americans are apparently not susceptible to this new prestige norm, and maintain their historic dialect.

Change in New York City in positive evaluation of *r*-vocalization (Labov 1966)

- In Labov's study New Yorkers of all ages ranked speech samples from fellow New Yorkers which contained instances of *r*-vocalization
- Speakers 40 and over at the time of the study (those born before 1923) had a positive evaluation of *r*-vocalization, but younger speakers were uniform in their negative evaluation of *r*-vocalization
- The change in the model for prestige pronunciation appeared after World War II.

But the loss of prestige status for *r*-vocalization in NYC does not lead to change in dialect

- In casual speech New Yorkers of all classes show *r*-vocalization (Labov 1966)
- In more formal speech, New Yorkers of all classes decrease the instances of *r*-vocalization in their speech. (Labov 1966)
- The same is true in more recent studies.
- In other words, New Yorkers maintain the *r*-vocalization in their dialect, but also use the more prestigious *r*-fullness of mainstream dialect depending on circumstances.

What is the situation in Boston and Eastern New England?

- Has *r*-vocalization lost or maintained its prestige status for speakers from Eastern New England?
- Is *r*-vocalization still a consistent, though variable, feature of the Eastern New England dialect, as in NYC? Or is there a generational change away from *r*-vocalization as in the South?

How to study the question of whether *r*-vocalization is positively or negatively evaluated?

- Direct inquiry using a questionnaire
- Indirect inquiry, using reported evaluation of speakers themselves based on speech samples from them.