



## **Trail Tree Newsletter**

**January 2016**

This is the Volume 31 of the Quarterly Trail Tree Project Newsletter. We hope the topics in this newsletter will be of interest to you. If you want us to report on other things, just let us know and we will be happy to do that. Below is all the latest news.

### **Trail Tree (TT) Database**

#### *Trail Tree Database*

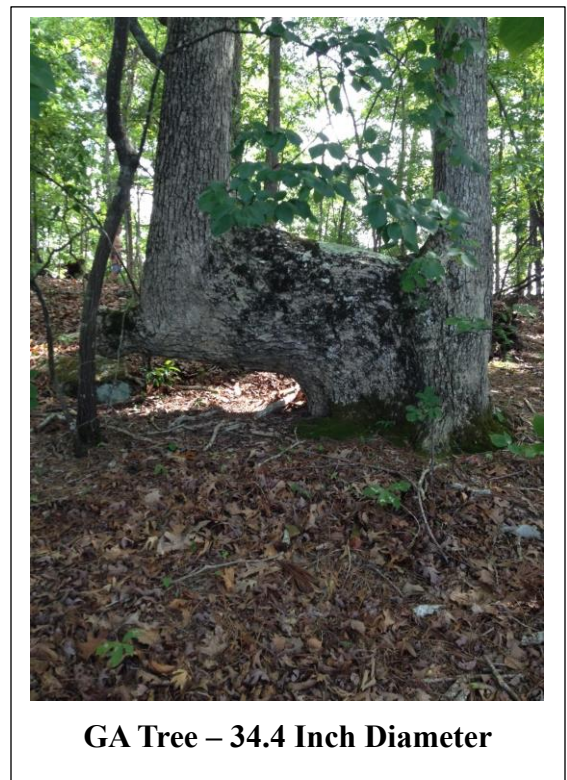
I wrote in the September issue that the submissions of trees had all of a sudden picked up the late summer. That pace accelerated in the fall due to a number of articles appearing in the media. But more importantly, the undiscovered Big'uns started being sent in from people who had never heard about the trees until reading one of the articles. Some of these trees are very significant. The next section will report on some of the more interesting trees that have been submitted in the past several months.

#### *Trees of Interest*

##### **GA Trees**

Russell Burns has been on the trail of searching for Indian Trees for years. He discovered a few more this past fall in GA. His team of Rusty, Rich and himself found several trees near Lake Lanier, GA where we have located previously a large number of trees.

Russell found several trees in close proximity to each other on the lake. Within about 2 miles of the locating of these two trees, there are five more trees previously found.



**GA Tree – 34.4 Inch Diameter**

## West VA Tree

Tony sent in a tree from West VA located near Bluefield. The tree points to water. Also located in the vicinity of the tree are several rock cairns.



**GA Tree – 34.7 Inch Diameter**



**West VA Tree – 30 Inch Diameter**

## AR Tree

David sent in his tree located on his father's old farm near War Eagle Creek just south of Hobbs State Park in AR where many Indian Trees are located. Our veteran research, Peggy Thompson, went to the site to collect the data on this significant tree. The tree appears to mark a trail heading to a crossing point on War Eagle Creek. The tree is 44.6 inches in diameter and still in good shape for its old age.

## Illinois Tree

Nathen sent in a tree from near Springfield, ILL. The tree is 40 inches in diameter which he found while hunting in the area. The tree points toward a small creek in the area that flows west into the Sangamon River, At this point of the river, the river forms an Eagle's Head and when you look at the larger scale, it appear to be an Eagle in flight.



**AR Tree – 44.6 Inch Diameter**

## VA Trees

We have located a few Indian Trees in VA but one would expect with all the urban renewal, many of the trees would have been lost by now. But not so! Two recent submittals came from VA and both are located on the James River, one SW and one SE of Richmond, VA. Both of these trees are significant due to their size. The first tree in VA was sent in by Sandy. One of our researchers, Jo Freeman, did more research on the tree. The second tree was sent in by Bill who discovered it on a Boy Scout hike several years ago and recently revisited to site to collect the data on the tree.



**Illinois Tree – 40 Inch Diameter**

## Indian Trails Mapping Program

In 2015, we began using a newly developed mapping technique that uses TOPO maps displayed on an IPAD 3 with a mapping App connected via Bluetooth to a device known as a Bad Elf which connects to the navigation satellites. The Bad Elf sends the satellite GPS coordinates to the map and the trail is recorded as you walk along the route. When the trail mapping is completed, the IPAD can be used to mail the trial data via a WIFI link to your home computer for later processing on Google Earth.

We used this capability in December to map the Grierson Creek Indian Trading Path which we have previously located in Heard and Troup County, GA. Large sections of this trail had been previously mapped in 2014 and the new section allowed us to extend the trail almost to the AL line.

We will be using this new mapping technique to map other trails in 2016.



**VA Tree – 35.35 Inch Diameter**



**VA Tree – 41 Inch Diameter**



**Grierson Creek Indian Trail**

***New Research to Begin in 2016 Using Dowsing Rods***

David Johnson, in late 2015, shared his knowledge about using dowsing rods to locate underground streams that are connected to Indian sites. David has been doing research on Indian sites in North and South American for 40 years. He has learned over this extensive period of time, that almost all Indian artifact (trees, cairns, etc.) and sacred sites are connected to underground streams of water. This past summer, he showed our colleague, Dr. Forrest Ketchin in Colorado, that his techniques could be used to locate Indian Trees. We have since tested that theory on trees in AL and GA and found it to be true on these east coast trees. We have also tested it at a rock cairn site in GA and found it to also be true for that ancient site. The Mountain Stewards have been given permission to do an extensive survey of the GA rock cairn site which will begin in late January 2016.

To most of us, we are familiar with dowsing rods being used to locate water for well drilling and pipes previously installed underground. In my training in dowsing in January 2015, I also learned to locate unmarked graves. The science of why dowsing works is very obscure and not well understood. It is often considered by some to be witch-craft. But if one studies its history, you will find that it was known as far back as 9,000 BC and had been used for many purposes throughout history. My recent

introduction to this technique for research has opened my eyes to a whole new realm of understanding the Indian culture. My dowsing rods now travel with me at all times.

## **Mystery of the Trees Documentary**

We screened the documentary a number of times in 2015 and look forward to more screenings in 2016. If you would like to schedule a screening in your area, contact Don Wells at [mountainman93@gmail.com](mailto:mountainman93@gmail.com).

## ***Mystery of the Trees* Presentations and Book Signings**

We reprinted the book *Mystery of the Trees* in November 2015 and have already sold almost a hundred copies of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. With the book back in print, we will expand our lecture series for 2016. Below is our planned lecture series for 2016.

# **Mountain Stewards Presentations for 2016**

## **New Presentations**

- **Native Americans in Colonial History – 35 Minutes**

Most American's perception of our Indigenous people is one of fierce warriors in war-paint fighting with the settlers who were trying to carve out homesteads in land occupied by the Indians. The Hollywood portrayal is often anchored with the scene of the Calvary coming over the ridge to rescue the settlers from the savage Indians attacking the wagon train. Few, however, know the history of the Indians who served as commissioned officers first with the British and later under the Continental Army. After the Revolutionary War, other warriors fought in battles against the British, Spanish and other Indian tribes. Many Indians also served as guides for Army units as well as guides for those exploring the frontier as our country expanded west.

This presentation tells the story of the Indians who served as part of the US Militia and US Army.

- **The Trail of Tears – Not Just the Cherokees – 35 Minutes**

In many states the school system's curriculum allows for a short unit on the forced relocation of the Indians. Generally only the Cherokee Removal from August 1838 to March 1839 is all that is included. In fact the removal period began in 1790 and continued until the late 1850's. All of the Five Civilized Tribes were affected.

This presentation discusses the removal of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek and Seminole from southeastern America. The pain and suffering for these indigenous peoples and the long term impact on their lives is presented in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Indian Removal.

- **George Washington’s Secret Agent – A Thousand Mile Journey Without a Map – 40 Minutes**

After the end of the Revolutionary War, our first President, George Washington, was eager to put war behind him and get the new country established on a firm footing. However, on multiple fronts, the conflict continued, not with the British, but with the Indians. The Constitution gave the Federal Government control over Indian Affairs. However, some states continued to be determined to drive all of the Indians out. They often ignored the Federal Government’s rights. The situation in Georgia was so bad that the Creek Indians declared war on the state! Washington did not believe that Georgia would deal with the situation peacefully so he sent his agent, Col. Marius Willett, on a “Secret Mission.” His job was to reach the Creek nation without alerting the people of Georgia and convince the Creek Chiefs to sign a treaty with the National government.

This presentation tells the story of Washington’s Secret Agent’s journey to Alabama, his return to New York with 27 Creek Chiefs and the signing of the 1790 Treaty of New York. It also covers the return trip of the Indians under logistics support of Major Calab Swan.

## **Other Presentations**

- **Mystery of the Trees – 45 minutes**

The *Mystery of the Trees* is the story of curiously bent trees that were used by Indians as sign post across the continent. As they traveled, often great distances, to hunt, trade, gather medicinal plants, and communicate with other tribes, the trees guided their way. Exploring a story that has been hidden for many years, this presentation also leaves the audience with an appreciation for Native people who hold a great reverence for the earth and nature. These living artifacts have many names: Indian Trail Trees, Marker trees, Thong trees, Signal trees, Prayer trees and Culturally Modified trees are a few. In less than a decade, bent trees have been documented as existing or as having previously existed in 40 states. Using GPS (Geographical Positioning System) and digital topographic technology trees are correlated with known Indian trails and village sites. Plotting this information on topographic and 3-D maps graphically tells us more about the cultural history of the Native Americans. These trees are sacred to the Native Americans and many tribes bent trees as part of their culture.

- **In the Presence of the Elders – 35 Minutes**

Many tribal elders were interviewed over the past eight years as the story about the *Mystery of the Trees* developed. Those interviews not only resulted in a greater appreciation of the story of the trees and the other great losses of their culture but also gave us a greater understanding and respect for the spirituality and wisdom of the Native Americans. Through the use of these filmed interviews, this presentation shares what has been learned about their culture, their spirituality and their wisdom from those who were the original inhabitants of our country.

- **Mystery of the Trees Documentary Film – 30 minute version**

This first-ever filmed glimpse into a part of Native American culture that has been mostly hidden from public knowledge is presented in this documentary film. The narration and participation in the telling of this story by Native American actor Wes Studi (*Dancing with Wolves*, *Last of the Mohicans*, plus many other films) anchors this film. Interviews with tribal elders from the Cherokee, Muscogee-Creek, Comanche, Delaware, Ute, Osage, Quapaw and other tribes adds the interest.

In a eight year journey, the Mountain Stewards moved from mere curiosity about oddly shaped trees they began to encounter to an in-depth research study of what many call Indian Marker Trees. In the best tradition of scientific exploration, probing the mystery of trees first found in their own back yard raised many questions. As a result, in 2007, researchers from multiple states joined with the Mountain Stewards in exploring this fascinating but obscure story. The initial meeting of these researchers was held at Hobbs State Park in March 2007. As research continued, interviews with tribal elders provided glimpses into the understanding of the cultures which, after living close to nature for thousands of years, were almost destroyed by European settlers.

The interviews with the elders not only resulted in a greater appreciation of the Indians use of trees but also instilled in the researchers a deeper respect for the spirituality and wisdom of those who were the first people on the land. It is hoped that the documentary will encourage the preservation of these story-telling trees as well as point the way to future areas of study about many other aspects of Indian culture that have been impacted. The film cover the journey of our research and tells the story not told to this depth before.

## **Presentation Planning**

Each presentation usually includes a 5 minute introduction of the speaker plus time for questions and answers folling the presentation. Thus, it is best to add 15-20 minutes to the presentation time to allow for the entire event.

## **New Book for 2016**

Our new book, *Stories of Our Indian Culture – In the Southeast* is completed and undergoing editing at this time. We hope to have it read for publication about mid-year if we can find enough money to publish the book..

## **Facebook**

To stay in touch with our activities in between Newsletter issues, follow us on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/mysterytrees](http://www.facebook.com/mysterytrees) which provides a running account of our weekly activities. Please log on to the site and **LIKE** the page. This opens our information to a larger audience and helps educate folks about the program. Currently, we have over 1,300 **LIKES**. We are now striving for the 2,000 mark.