



Trail Tree Newsletter

October 2014

This is the Volume 26 of the Quarterly Trail Tree Project Newsletter. We hope the number of 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

Number of Trees

The number of trees in the database is going down since we have cleaned out some that no longer qualify. However, new trees are still being submitted and some are of great interest. The trees we accept now are in the 20 inch diameter or larger in order to be of an age when the Indians occupied the area where the tree is located.

Trees of Interest

We are now through the summer months and the leaves should be falling off the trees soon. The time to find the marker trees is fall and winter when they can be spotted from a longer distance. Time to brush off your GPS, compass, camera, etc. and be ready to walk the forests. The more interesting recently submitted trees are discussed below.

Illinois Tree

Don Miller, a member of the Mountain Stewards Trail Crew, visits family in Illinois periodically. This summer when driving one of the back roads in Illinois, Don spotted a Marker Tree located at the entrance to a driveway. This tree appears to be pointing toward a water source. With all the farming activity in the vicinity of the tree, it will be hard to find other related trees and Indian pathways. However, the family that owns the farm where this tree is located has preserved it for us to locate and document.

Tennessee Tree

The Tennessee tree, which is 30.5 inches in diameter, points to a gap on the Cumberland Escarpment where an old Indian Trail descended into the Sequatchie Valley north of Chattanooga, TN. This was Cherokee territory. The tree may also be pointing to a water source on the escarpment. One branch of the Cherokee Trail of Tears crossed through the Sequatchie Valley.



Tennessee Tree



Illinois Tree

Alabama Tree

Jimmy McKennan, our researcher in NE Alabama has found another tree on the Lookout Mountain ridge south of Chattanooga, TN. This tree is 33 inches in diameter and points down the mountain toward the valley trails below that lead to Fort Payne, AL. The tree is located in DeKalb County, AL where many very large trees have been located over the past two years.

Missouri Tree

The Missouri Tree was located months ago but just recently documented. This 25 inch diameter tree is located on the Little Niangua arm of Lake of the Ozarks. Although not very big for an Indian tree, the tree is actually growing in bedrock so its growth has been very slow. The tree points toward the location of a former trading post originally used by the Indians and later by the pioneers. Many Indian artifacts have been found near this location. The tree probably also points to the stream that now makes up the lake.



Alabama Tree



Missouri Tree

Arkansas Tree

I did a presentation on “In the Presence of the Elders” at Hobbs State Park, AR in early August. Jim Bilgischer attended the lecture and brought pictures of a large tree he had found on his property. Fortunately, Bob Gaut and Peggy Thompson, some of our Arkansas researchers were there also to pick up on the documentation of the tree. Bob was closer to it so he met with the Bilgischer’s to document the tree.

This white oak tree is almost 31 inches in diameter and located near Natural Dam, AR. The tree points east over a bluff and down toward a stream. There are a number of springs in the area and legend says the Indians used the area as a camp site. A search for artifacts to confirm that fact will have to be pursued at a later date.

North Carolina Tree

This tree was recently reported in the vicinity of Lilesville, NC on the Pee Dee River. The tree is located about two miles from a Cherokee Burial Ground. Many Indian artifacts have been located in the vicinity of the tree and there is a possible small Cherokee village that may have been in the vicinity of the tree.

The Pee Dee River has been dammed up and thus the area near the tree has been flooded disturbing what history of the Indians in that area may have existed. This area is east of Charlotte, NC.



Arkansas Tree



North Carolina Tree

Ute Trees

We began learning about the Ute Trees in 2008 when we went to Colorado to film Loya Arrum, a Northern Ute elder. Loya has “walked on” this year so we have lost another very knowledgeable elder. This year, we participated in the 2nd Annual Ute Prayer Tree Conference in Colorado Springs, CO led by Dr. James Jefferson, Southern Ute elder and John Anderson of Colorado Springs. These two conference organizers have a great deal of knowledge about the Ute Trees and shared that knowledge with the 40 plus participants at the conference.

The conference was held at the 400 acre La Foret Retreat and Conference Center outside of Colorado Springs. The site has been determined by Dr. Jefferson to have been a summer camp for the Utes when the men went to hunt buffalo in the Colorado plains. Many Ute Trees were found on the property marking the cultural heritage of the Utes.

The Ute Trees are similar to those found on the east coast but yet their purposes are different. The Ute’s use Ponderosa Pines since there are few hardwoods in the western states. The Ponderosa Pine lives for about 600 years so it is the perfect marker tree for the Utes.

The Utes bent trees for directional markers to a location often of a sacred nature, to mark sites where a person of importance died or was born, and other special purpose trees. The directional marker trees are often only bent about 30 degrees off of vertical and then allowed to go vertical again. Many of these trees point to Pike Peak which is the most sacred site to the Utes. The Utes called Pikes Peak “Tavakiev” or Sun Mountain. The two directional trees shown on the next page were located at the La Foret site. The tree on the left is a normal directional tree pointing toward Pikes Peak; the tree on the right is a directional tree pointing toward a water source or other location. Several Ute Burial Trees were found on the La Fort property including two that pointed toward each other which must have been of some significance. A picture of the Burial Tree can be seen on the next page.

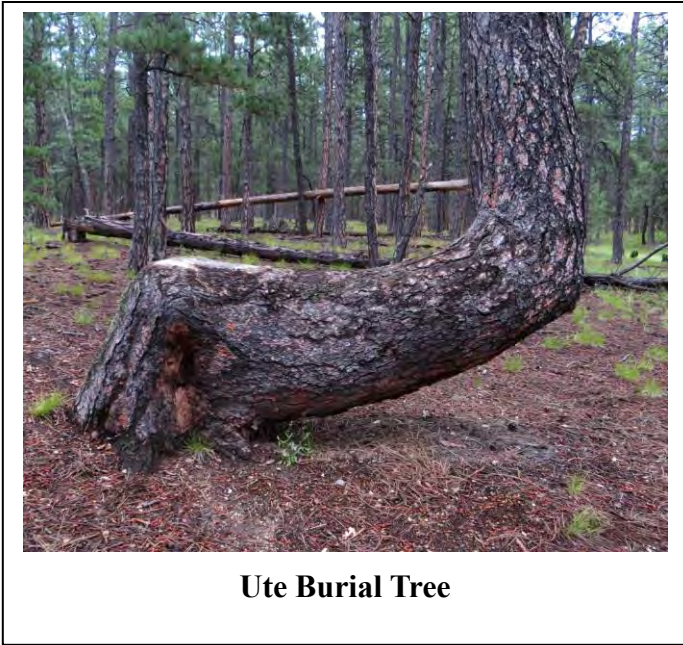


**Ute Directional Tree Known as
the Grandfather Tree**



Ute Marker Tree

A new Ute type tree was also located at the old Ute camp site and identified by Dr. Jefferson. This tree is called a Medicine Man Tree and has a special purpose.



Indian Trails Mapping Program

We reported previously on our research of the Grierson Trail in GA and AL. This is a major Creek Indian Trading Path from GA to AL. With the fall now here, we can continue that research to find remnants of the old trail that have not been paved over.

We have now begun a research project on the travels of the Creek Indians from GA and AL to New York City in 1790 to sign the Treaty of New York. This thousand mile journey along Indian Trails is one of those fascinating stories of Indian travel that we can only imagine considering we can't go very far without maps, compass, GPS and in-car navigation systems. A resource document that we are using to study this journey is the journal account of George Washington's secret agent who brought the Creek Indian Chiefs to New York. This resource document, "A Narrative of Military Actions of Colonel Marinus Willett," was published in 1831 by his son.

In November, we will return to southeast GA to continue researching some Creek Indian sites near the Altamaha River.

We have also begun some research in the Guntersville, AL area under the leadership of John Stanton, our AL research associate.

Mystery of the Trees Documentary

Our trip to Colorado included four days of filming the Utes at the 2nd Annual Ute Prayer Tree Conference. That filming primarily focused on Dr. Jefferson who is a spokesperson for the Indian

culture and who is diligently working to convey the need to preserve and pass on the cultural heritage to the future generations. That theme is what we wanted for the ending of the *Mystery of the Trees* documentary. We have now edited Dr. Jefferson's interviews and it has been spliced into the documentary.

With this finally filming, the documentary has now gone into production and should be ready for showings in December of this year. In 2015, we will take the documentary to a number of Film Festivals and other showings and hopefully eventually produce a DVD of the documentary for sale to the public.

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

We have made 24 presentations so far this year with six more planned at this moment but that may change as more seem to be requested all the time. We already five talks booked in 2015 and we have not yet started advertising.

One of the most exciting presentations scheduled for 2015 is at the Wilderness Wildlife Week in Pigeon Forge, TN. This annual event covers an entire week and attracts about 30,000 people. We will be doing the *Mystery of the Trees* and the *In the Presence of the Elders* presentations at the conference.

The sale of the *Mystery of the Trees* book continue at a reasonable pace. The monies received from the sale of the books supports the documentary costs which are significant. We have less than 350 books left in stock and don't plan a third printing unless there is a great demand for the book in 2015.

If you wish to schedule a visit to your area, please contact us at mountainman93@gmail.com. There is no cost for the presentations; however, we do not travel long distances to talk to just a few people due to the costs to us. The current talk schedule can be found on the Mountain Stewards web site near the bottom left of the main page, (www.mountainstewards.org).

Facebook

To stay in touch with our activities in between Newsletter issues, follow us on our Facebook page at 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 to help educate folks about the program. Currently, we have over 800 **LIKES**. We are striving for the 1,000 mark. Since the average Facebook person has 130 friends, then every time we put out a post to those that Liked our page on Facebook, there is a possibility that approximately 104,000 people will see it.

Dee Sturgis Artist

Last year we began a partnership with Dee Sturgis, a Georgia artist from Hazelhurst, GA who has a phenomenal gift for creating realistic paintings of landscapes, historical events and Indian cultural heritage. Through our relationship with Dee, we have shared all that we have learned from the tribal elders about the Indian Trees and particular heritage sites of the Muscogee-Creek Indians. Dee has taken that knowledge and created paintings to capture the history and heritage of the Muscogee-Creek Indians as well as others. Her paintings are part of her *Thru His Eyes Studio*.

We know you will be interested in seeing and perhaps purchasing a print copy of one or more of her paintings. The prints are made using the high quality Giclee process. Giclée printing is a process that uses fade-resistant, archival inks and archival substrates to print on large format printers. To view Dee's paintings, go to this link. <http://deesturgisartist.com/gallery.htm>. For more information or to order prints contact: Dee Sturgis, 912-375-0714; dee@deesturgisartist.com or Tom Hyatt, 770-828-5558; tom.hyatt@yahoo.com.

The first print of Dee's picture of Sam Proctor was presented to him on 1 August at the Muscogee-Creek Reservation.



Presentation of Dee's Painting to Sam Proctor