

Reading the Signs to Locate Tribal Villages and Sacred Sites

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Introduction

In our recent report, *A Proven Methodology for Locating and Documenting Indian Villages and Sacred Places*, we detailed the four-phase methodology to locate Indian sites. In Phase One, we described the use of written reports, maps, archaeological studies and more to be able to locate the village in question to within a mile or more. With those data, then in Phase Two, you can begin to refine that location to a more accurate location to within a quarter-mile or less so that in the Boots-on-the-Ground Phase, you have a good chance of finding the village or sacred site.

In some case however, there are no written reports, no maps and no data of a village location. In the southeastern U.S., the locations of the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and other tribes were well documented by early explorers and government Indian agents. However, over the period of a hundred plus years, the Indians ceded their lands either willing or by the result of wars and their villages were moved multiple times. The locations of where the villages were moved often was not recorded and this historical data is for the most part, lost.

On rare occasions, an early pioneer who moved into Indian territory soon after the Indians were relocated, recorded the history of that area in a book. G.J.N. Wilson wrote, *The Early History of Jackson County, GA* which was found in the University of California and digitized by the Microsoft Corporation in 2008 to make it available to the research community. That book recorded some of the history of the Creek and Cherokee who lived in the eastern part of Georgia in the late 1700's. Ruth Basinger Morgan wrote, *A Place Called Darracot* and published it in March 1978 in Aberdeen, MS. Her book covers the history of the northern part of Mississippi near Aberdeen and the Big Tombigbee River. This was home to the Chickasaw's before the settlers moved in. Ruth includes a rough map in her book on the location of the Chickasaw villages.

The Internet – Today's Alert Communication Medium for Tribal Site Location

We could drive the back roads of the country in search of tribal villages and sacred sites and waste a lot of time and resources. Our best source of information however comes through Internet sources. The Mountain Stewards Indian Cultural Heritage Program has multiple points of contact that feed information to us alerting us to possible sites. The Indian Trail Tree Project has been the best source of information as people from all over the U.S. and Canada can send in data via several Internet links to ask for help in evaluating Marker Trees and related features they find on their property or government property. They can send in data via www.mountainstewards.org or www.mysterytrees.org. Many are also connected to our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/mysterytrees and send in data through that portal. Lastly, others call to discuss what they have on their site and ask for help in evaluating their find.

It is impossible to check every site of which we are made aware for possible Indian features. We have to use our best judgment in selecting those that need a site visit for what may have existed there in the past. In general, a preliminary phone interview coupled with site pictures can help

greatly in determining which sites to visit. It all comes down to reading the signs and perceptive intuition to decide where to go to uncover tribal historical culture.

Reading the Signs of Indian Culture

The signs that help identify cultural sites are: Marker or oddly configured trees; rock cairns; rock formations that seem to have a pattern to them, sometimes celestial in configuration; circular rock formations large and small which may relate to a grave or graves; small earthen mounds; a spiritual sense about the place; energy emanating to the point you can feel its presence; medicinal plants; Indian trails; artifacts; people reporting unusual encounters or experiences at the site and more. Reading the signs is a major part of the Native Science process of evaluating an Indian site.

I've selected several sites at which "reading the signs" resulted in a more comprehensive understanding of what was located in the vicinity of the sign(s).

New Cowee, Jasper GA

Jo Tyson asked us to take a look at her acreage along Cove Creek near Jasper, GA. This valley, located between steep mountain slopes, is the perfect location for an Indian village. However, there are no signs that indicate the presence of a village. The thing that got our attention was Jo sharing about her experiences. Jo stated that every time she visited a particular location in her valley, she felt the presence of an Indian woman. Over time, she felt that she had a kinship with this woman.

Using dowsing, a Cherokee woman's grave was located where Jo felt her presence. Further, through interpretation of the grave, we found that this woman had been murdered in 1838 during the removal of Cherokees from northern GA. Finding the woman's grave told us to search further to see what might be located in this area. That search led to the comprehensive understanding that New Cowee Cherokee Village moved to this location in 1754 after being encroached upon in the Old Cowee in NC, 75 miles to the north. The village consisted of about 50 families of the Paint and Long Hair Clans of the Cherokee. Located at the village were many of the common cultural features including a Council Site, a Dance Grounds, and a Ceremonial Healing site. Another sign that helped locate the Healing site was a Marker Tree pointing directly to it. On the hill to the west of the site, we also located a common graveyard consisting of at least 58 graves and a Ceremonial Equinox Observation site.

One small sign or feeling led to the location of an important Cherokee village in Pickens County, GA.

Cherokee Rock Village, Sand Rock, AL

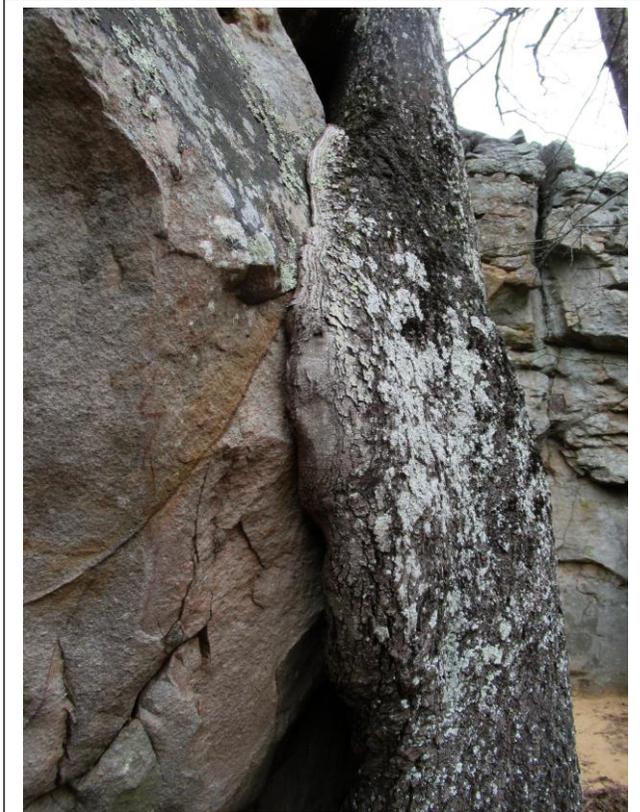
Cherokee Rock Village is one of those very unique places that captures your imagination. You cannot help but wonder about the history of the site. Located on a ridge line above Leesburg, AL and south of Sand Rock, AL, this sandstone rock site has boulders looming 30 to 40 feet in the air with narrow canyons created by water millions of years ago. The power of this site somewhat overwhelms you as you walk among the canyons.

It took several visits to this site from several researchers to finally get a sense of what was here. The Earth Energy Lines at the site led us to search further to discover the sites' purpose and overall importance to the Cherokee.

Located just off of the parking lot in a large rock formation spread out on the ground, we discovered a major Ceremonial Healing site consisting of seven upwelling energy lines. Further mapping of the energy at the site led us to two Council sites and a second healing site near a tree that had grown into the sandstone rock formation. These cultural features are only associated with villages which led us to find the village several miles away. The village was determined to be a Cherokee village of the Paint Clan that moved there around 1814 and remained until the removal in 1838.

Our visits to Cherokee Rock Village helped us identify two other signs to watch for when searching for energy lines. Where the energy lines passed through the large rock walls and boulders, there would often be a crack or crevice in the rock exactly where the energy line aligned with the rock. Further, where the lines passed through a tree they would, in many cases, cause the tree to grow gnarly.

The sign at this site was the powerful energy of the healing site and the overall presence of the site. The energy of the healing site was so powerful that some researchers could feel it with their hands which became slightly warm when held over the energy lines.



Cherokee Rock Village Healing Tree

New Senecca, Free Home, GA

Rebecca Dickey emailed us about her 2-3-acre home site in Cherokee County, GA. She thought there might be some Marker trees there but more importantly she wanted to tell us about the experience she encountered at her spring on the property. After interviewing Becky on the telephone, it was obvious to us that there was some powerful healing force on this property and we needed to check it out.

Becky described to us her miraculous healing that occurred after she had suffered a catastrophic medical condition. When she could move a little bit, she began sitting on a log by the spring on her property. She sat on that log almost daily for months. When we investigated the area of her spring, we discovered a healing site that had six upwelling energy lines. Further investigation determined that there was a small Cherokee village located about 1.5 miles to the NE of the site.

This village had moved to this location in 1798 and remained there until the removal in 1838. The village was determined to be a remnant of the Senneca Cherokee Village from near what is now Clemson, SC. It only had members of the Deer Clan. This small village was not a Principle Town with all the common cultural features but it did locate where it would be close to a Ceremonial Healing site. Becky was healed at that same site

Another sign that told us the importance of this site was the existence of the Conasauga Blue Burrowing Crayfish that lives in the spring. Muskogee Creek elder, Sam Proctor, told us years ago that a special critter would be found protecting an Indian healing spring in Meriwether County, GA. Columbus State University researchers found the Piedmont Blue Burrowing Crayfish, a rare crayfish that existed only in select places close to Meriwether County. The Conasauga Blue Burrowing Crayfish is a very rare species found only in a limited geographical area. Apparently, Becky's spring and healing site has this rare species protecting it.

Located near the spring, we also found the grave of the chief of the village who died around 1810. On the adjacent property on a hill above the spring, we determined the chief's wife was buried. She died around 1815.

Becky's story of her healing led us to this site. It was a remarkable story and our first documentation of the healing power of Indian healing sites.

Old Tugalo, Waynesville, NC

Patty emailed us about her unique Marker Tree in early 2017. We had seen this tree configuration before and knew it was an important sign marking graves of important people. This site obviously needed to be investigated further.

The Marker Tree configuration shown to the right has been determined to mark four graves found near the tree. Four Cherokee graves placed on a large hill above Pigeon Gap and Raccoon Creek Valley east of Waynesville, NC indicated there was likely a village near by and possibly other graves in the vicinity.

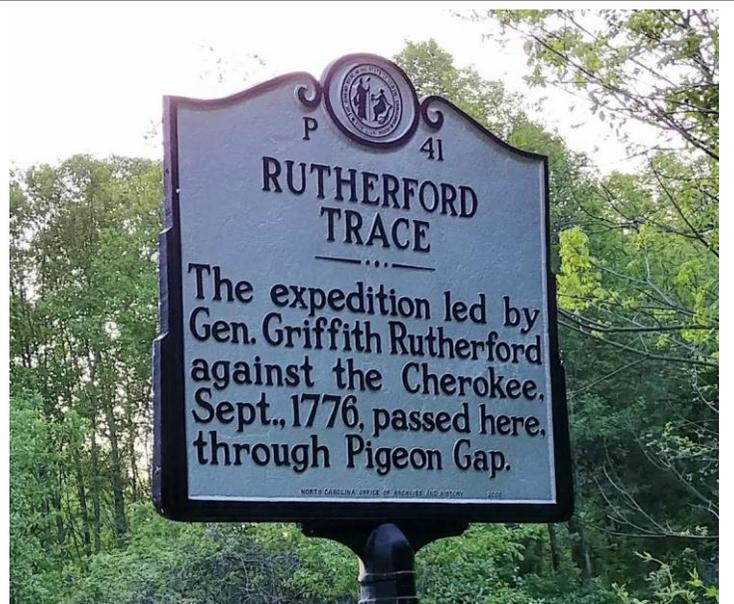


Tugalo Marker Tree

A search of Patty's property on the hill above the valley located multiple Cherokee graves scattered across the hillside. The chief and his wife's grave were located near several rocks. Near another rock, we found the medicine man's grave. Not far from these graves a grave field with approximately 25-30 graves was located. All of these graves clearly show that there is a village nearby.

In the valley below the hill along Raccoon Creek, we located Old Tugalo Cherokee village which had approximately 90 families. This village had been there probably from the early 1700's. The early Cherokee village locations were never recorded so finding this village adds to the historical knowledge about the Cherokee. General Rutherford led a group of NC Militia to burn the Cherokee towns in 1776 as part of the Revolutionary War. The sign to the right is the only indication that the village was destroyed in 1776.

The location of Tugalo Cherokee village was known to exist on the Tugalo River near Toccoa, GA at the headwaters of the Savannah River. In fact, the Cherokee of Tugalo moved to the river between Georgia and South Carolina in 1776 after having their town burned by Rutherford's forces.



Rutherford Burning of Cherokee Towns

For this location, the sign of a specially configured tree led to the discovery of early Cherokee history.

Hitchitee Village, Upatoi, GA

Jim McLendon called us about his 28-acre property in October 2018. He had a Marker Tree on his property but felt there was more to be found on his land. After interviewing Jim on the phone, it was decided to visit his property near Upatoi, GA 15 miles east of Columbus GA. The existence of a fairly common Marker tree is not worthy of further investigation. However, what got our attention was Jim's telling about a site on his property that he visited often. He felt there was something there. We thought that this was a sign that there might be something spiritual about the property,

The area Jim mentioned turned out to be the location of multiple Creek Indian graves. In fact, a large number of Creek Indians were found buried in earthen mounds about 2-3 feet high and 6-8 feet wide. The graves stretched out for 100 yards to the north from where Jim had a feeling that something was there. These graves were located along the edge of a plateau before the land sloped downward to Kendall Creek. There were energy lines passing through the grave field. These many graves indicated there had to be a village nearby.

A search along Kendal Creek identified a Hitchitee speaking Creek Indian village that had moved there around 1805. It remained there until that land was ceded in the Treaty of Indian Springs of 1825-27. This Hitchitee village was determined to be a Principle town. It had all the common cultural features of a Council House, a Ceremonial Healing site, a Ceremonial Burial site and a

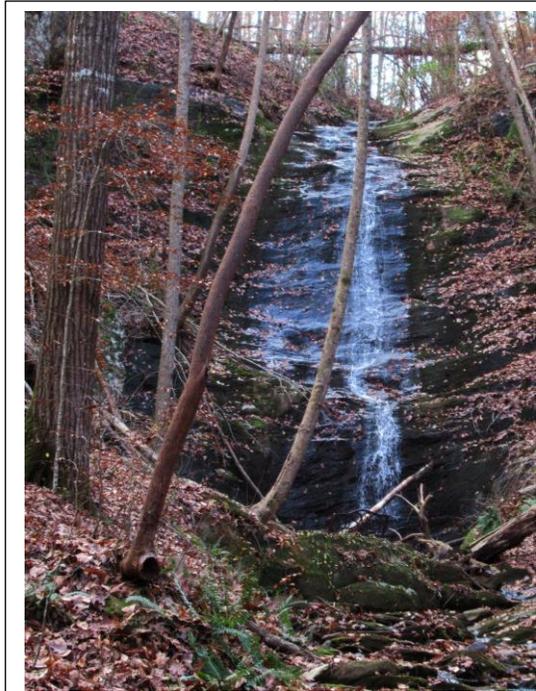
Dance or Stomp Grounds. All of the common features had upwelling energy lines passing through them.

Hickory Log Cherokee Village, Canton, GA

We knew where Hickory Log village was located so signs were not needed to find it. It is just east of Exit 20 on I-575 under the Walmart and north of the Etowah River. The sign that opened a deeper understanding of Hickory Log was a Marker Tree located SE of Hickory Log about 1.3 miles on the south side of the Etowah.

There are several housing communities on the south bank of the Etowah River. Our friend Diane and her husband Ronnie invited us to come see a Marker tree on a trail in their community. The tree is marking the graves of a young couple who were arrested and removed from Hickory Log with the other Cherokees in 1838. They were being walked to Fort Buffington, a collection fort, SE of Hickory Log. The young married couple apparently resisted the soldiers and were shot and died on the trail. Someone bent a tree to mark their graves and placed them over an underground stream and an energy line. What got our attention in the community hiking area was the amount of energy throughout the small wilderness. Many trees in the wilderness showed the effects of energy lines.

More importantly, the dowsing rods responded positively to the question, “Is there a Ceremonial site nearby?” A quarter mile south of the Marker Tree is a 40-foot waterfall. Directly below the waterfall was an upwelling energy site that was determined to be a birthing site. We have not located many sites used in birthing so it was an unusual find. This site was set aside for women from Hickory Log. Perhaps the pregnant woman would be brought here days before she started labor to sit on the upwelling energy to prepare her for the birthing effort. Few village sites have been determined to have a birthing site so more attention will have to be made in analyzing future sites.



Birthing Site

In addition to the birthing site, a Ceremonial Burial site was also located along another small creek in the community. This site was used for burials of the Hickory Log leaders.

Hitchitee Village, Lake Russell Wildlife Management Area, Cornelia, GA

In the eastern part of north Georgia in Stephens and Banks Counties is the Lake Russell Wildlife Management Area (WMA) consisting of 17, 300 acres. This area was occupied by the Creek and Cherokee Indians until these lands were ceded early in Georgia history.

Judy & Ken, our north Georgia research team have been searching the WMA for several years and have found many Marker Trees and other Indian sites. A recent Marker Tree find by them led to the discovery of the Hitchitee village. The Marker tree they located was a healing tree with two arms pointing about 90 degrees apart. If you have a healing tree, there is likely a village nearby. In fact, the village was located less than 0.1 mile to the east of the tree. The tree was the sign to a deeper understanding of this place.

The Hitchitee were part of the Creek Confederacy. This village was determined to have moved to the site along Frady Branch Creek in 1735. It remained there until about 1773. The village experienced an epidemic of cholera in 1773, probably brought to the village by a trader, which killed 38 members of the tribe. Disease epidemics are considered bad medicine and the village usually move after one occurs.

Like most Creek Mother Town villages, the Hitchitee village had a Council House, a Stomp Grounds, a Ceremonial Healing site and a Ceremonial Burial site. After the spirit had left the body, the remains were buried in a common grave area which we found near the Ceremonial Burial site. There were 24 graves in the common burial site. Located near that site were the graves of those that died from the cholera epidemic. All of the common cultural features had upwelling energy.

An Indian trail was located near the village heading south. Not far from the village were two Marker Trees marking the graves of eleven Cherokee warriors who died in a battle with the Georgia Militia around 1805. This area of Georgia had been ceded by the Indians in the late 1790's. It is likely these Cherokee warriors were still using the area for hunting or may have moved into the area and were attacked by the Militia.