

APPALACHIAN FREE PRESS



November 2022 - Volume 2, Issue 3

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Jo Ann's Corner

By Jo Ann Bullard

Good morning. Welcome to Jo Ann's Virtual Café 2022. Come on in and help yourself to a breakfast beverage. Let's talk. Miss Josie is fixing biscuits and gravy, biscuits with bacon and eggs, and all our favorites today. Here's a Thanksgiving story.

This is a story of how an old turkey changed a man's life. Farmer Brown had one old turkey left that he had been saving for Thanksgiving Dinner. He had decided to stop raising turkeys. He thought they ate too much and were too much trouble.

He had named his last turkey Tom as a joke. Now Farmer Brown did do one good thing. He would let people use Tom as the mascot in the annual Thanksgiving Parade in town. When people heard that Farmer Brown was going to eat old Tom, they were not happy. Several people offered to buy Tom from Farmer Brown, but he wouldn't have any of that.

You see when Farmer Brown decides what he wants to do, he won't change his mind. Several years ago, Farmer Brown's attitude toward things took a very negative spin. No one knew why but they got used to it. A couple of days before Thanksgiving a man named Henry stopped by to see Farmer Brown.

"I need some straw for my strawberry plants this Winter. Can I buy a couple of bales from you?" asked Henry. "Go help yourself, Henry. I will be in the house for you to pay me," said Farmer Brown.

After Henry loaded two bales of straw into his pickup truck, he went into Farmer Brown's house to pay him. "What's the matter with you, Henry? You look like you saw a ghost," said Farmer Brown. "Well! I did. I was picking up a bale of straw and turned around and there was old Farmer Green looking at me. You know he died here years ago. He said to give you this note. I am out of here. I won't be back until next Spring. I am scared," said Henry.

Before Farmer Brown could answer, Henry ran to his pickup and sped away. Farmer Brown opened the note,

"Be careful, Farmer Brown. Tom Turkey must live, or you will be cursed to live alone all your life."

Farmer Brown laughed at the note. That ain't nothing, he thought. I am already cursed to live alone. Farmer Brown went to bed early that night. He woke up by someone pounding on his front door at midnight. He opened his front door and yelled, "Who is disturbing my

sleep?” In front of him was a man that looked like Farmer Green. “I am Farmer Green. I tried to warn you by giving Henry a note for you. Do not kill Tom Turkey or you will regret it forever.”

A big flash of light blinded Farmer Brown and Farmer Green was gone. Farmer Brown laughed, “Why should I believe what just happened? I must have drunk too much hard cider and am seeing things.” The next day Farmer Brown watched his prize turkey Tom walk around this barnyard.

Old Tom was fat enough to give him several good meals. He caught Tom and put him in a cage in the barn. Tom looked at him like he knew what was going to happen to him. Farmer Brown jumped back from the cage. There was a faint voice that said, “Don’t do what you are going to do. I am a sacred turkey from the old days. You are alone because of your father. You should have married her. She still loves you.”

Farmer Brown looked around. There was only Tom and him in the barn. The only one that knew about that was him. Farmer Brown ran back into his house. It was starting to rain just before he closed the door. Lightning flashed, and he thought he saw his father in the middle of the barnyard. His father yelled, “Please forgive me I was wrong.”

It couldn’t have been him. His father had died a year ago. Farmer Brown grabbed a big jug of moonshine and went straight into his living room. He needed a drink to calm his nerves. Instead of one he had several and fell fast asleep. His grandfather clock struck 12 times to wake him up.

A Native American Chief stood in front of him. “Who are you?” asked Farmer Brown. “I am Chief Windotte. I was sent to you to help you find your way. You are coming with me. I have something to show you.” The Chief waved his war lance three times around his head.

The next thing Farmer Brown knew he was standing outside of a church that had only a few people in it. He could hear Pastor Joseph say, “I tried to help this poor soul, but he wouldn’t listen. He was afraid of his father. He became sad and hated being alive. He loved only one thing. A wonderful woman named Wind Song.

They could have had a long life together, but he will be buried next to her. She died of loneliness just like him. Chief Windotte waved his war lance. The next scene was a tombstone. He read the inscription on the tombstone. “Our Beloved Wing Song.” Farmer Brown couldn’t read anymore. All he could do was think of what could have been but not what would have been.

A flash of light blinded him again. When he could see clearly, he saw Chief Windotte. “The Big Turkey you call Tom is the sacred bird of my tribe. He tried to tell you, but you never listened. Your heart was cold and full of hate for your father. Tomorrow is all you will have. Make the most of it or your life will be wasted.

The next morning, he woke up. He ran to the barn. He opened the cage and asked Tom, “What should I do?” Tom said, “Take me to the Parade. She will be there.”

Farmer Brown took Tom and got in his pickup. He drove to town. The Thanksgiving Parade was going to start. Everyone saw that he had brought Tom. Farmer Brown looked up on the final float that always was reserved for Tom and the Parade Marshall. There she was. She was the Parade Marshall. He saw Victor who was in charge of the Parade.

“Can I hold Tom and sit by the Parade Marshall?” he asked. Victor said, “Yes, you can. It’s about time. I would suggest to you not to make it only one time but a lifetime?” Farmer Brown didn’t care how Victor knew about Wind Song. He jumped on the float.

Wind Song looked up from her Parade Marshall’s Chair. “How come you are here? But I am glad you decided to bring Tom. What made you come?” Farmer Brown replied,

“I made a big mistake not marrying you. I listened to my father instead of my heart. My father was a very prejudiced man. He said that he would disown me if I married you because you were not of his kind. I was too weak to go against him. I was afraid he would do something bad to us. I only did what he said to protect you. He was wrong and I was wrong. In the last two days, I had visions and now I see how stupid I was. How can you forgive me?”

Wind Song replied, “I too had visions many years ago. Those visions told me to wait for you. My Grandfather Chief Windotte told me in a dream he would make you see the light. I forgive you Farmer Brown.” Farmer Brown gave Tom to Wind Song. “I want to marry you if you will have me.” Wind Song said, “Yes! I believe your heart is pure. My grandfather told me that you did what you did to protect me. He knew you were too ashamed to ask me to marry you after you father died.”

Suddenly Tom Turkey flew out of Wind Song’s arms way into the sky above the Parade never to be seen again. Some people said that they saw Tom fly into the arms of a Native American Chief standing on a cloud above the Thanksgiving Parade just before the cloud disappeared.

That's the legend of Tom Turkey. One other thing, every Thanksgiving after that a large Turkey would fly over the parade and disappear. Thanks for coming. Enjoy your gift of today. Have a great day!

Having said that, let's share breakfast beverage some Native American Proverbs. The Proverbs of today go like this:

"You must speak straight so that your words may go as sunlight into the heart."

"When you see a new trail or a footprint you do not know follow it to the point of knowing."

Thanks for coming. Enjoy your gift of today. Have a great day. We look forward to seeing you tomorrow.

Folk Tale

By Sydney Hamilton

Can you imagine...

-the old lady who lived in a shoe?

Not looking like me or you-

Talking only crazy, talking to who?

-an attic full of mice,

One ran oft' with her boot book.

Can you imagine,

-the old lady who lived in a hat?

What did she do for a nap?

I bet she didn't have to worry about a bat!

Can you imagine,

-the old lady who lived on the hill?

She grew saffron & rosemary, but her life was no thrill.

One day, the wind blew Ms. Hat onto a Shrew.

They traveled far and low, the shrew had a friend with a new book!

A mouse, to the hill they run, with a book for the shrew.

“Well, that will just not do!” The lady from the hill set to find a thrill.

The wind blew thru to Ms. Shoe,
together, all are to giggle on a spore,

The ladies feel old – no more!

Banjo's Tales of Creeks, Creatures and Witches

By Banjo

The Banks of Lick Creek are Sacred Ground. Imagine if you will, it is May, in the year 1432. You are a young Cherokee woman (or young man) about 15 or maybe 16. You are in love and have plans to marry soon. Your favorite pastime is sitting on a hilltop around present day John Graham Road in the Ottway community of Greene County, Tennessee.

During the daytime, your view is specular. In the horizon to the north, the splendor of the Clinch mountain range provides the skyline an outline with Bays Mountain and Fodderstack Mountain. You can see the meandering Lick Creek and the fertile fields sitting along one side of the creek and on the other side, it is lined with steep rock walls.

In your sight is the small summer camp where you live a few months each summer while the Great Hunt is happening. You hear the happy giggles and the "I dare you to jump" temptations by the children swimming in Lick Creek. You look at the bluest sky and just ever now and again, a fluffy white cloud slowly passes over.

The small gray line of smoke from your camp's fire hither and thither into the atmosphere before disappearing. At night the summer sky is magical, dotted with fireflies and crowned by the stars of the milky way. The tall grasses sway in the light breeze. You can hear the elders sitting before the fire chanting and asking prayers to the Great Spirit as they pass the sacred pipe. The sounds of the wild bound you to a night of peaceful sleep on the banks of Lick Creek.

While the Great Hunt is going on, you live on the banks of Lick Creek. Every summer your tribe sends the best hunters with his family. Each family member has an assignment, so that the Great Hunt is a great success. The survival of your people depends on you.

This hunting ground is sacred land. You board the canoe to travel the waters of Lick Creek downstream. As you paddle along you see magnificent forests. Chestnut trees so thick and standing so tall you wonder if they are reaching to touch the Great Spirit's heart.

Spring has brought forth so many blooms and flowers. The air smells sweet and full of life. At times you wonder if there is enough clearance to pass through areas while floating downstream.

The mighty forests, so thick in places that their limbs and branches overhang, draping the passage of Lick Creek's flowing body of water. You float slowly bowing your head in reverence as you travel by the several burial mounds, built by your ancestors. Further down you pass by wide open fields with herds of buffalo for as far as the eye can see. Deer graze and black bears hunt.

Water fowl, geese, and ducks line the passage along Lick Creek's banks. The fish are so numerous, it's as if they jump to greet you as you pass by. Lick Creek is an old waterway. In her eons she has witnessed mankind from his humble beginnings to the proudful modern man. In her wisdom she has nurtured both.

Next time Lick Creek floods and comes out of her banks, think about this: maybe she is dreaming of her former life and reaching to try to regain her youth. I've included a story I wrote about Lick Creek a few years back. Here it is:

WHAT I'VE LEARNED ABOUT LICK CREEK Being a lifelong resident of Greene County, Tennessee and being primarily raised in the areas of western and northern Greene County, the lands on which Lick Creek flows, I got to thinking and thought, "I really don't know much about her". This creek, which in my past, has many times ruled my life with school closures, road closures, etc.

She has made many farmers "make it" or "break it." She has ruled the farmer's work, when to plant, when to harvest and when to get the hell out of her way. Her water's have turned mill wheels that fed our ancestors. She has been a swimming hole and a fishing hole to many of us. Hundreds of years ago the Native Americans built camps on her banks.

During the time of the Civil War, Potters used her clay to make their wares and many are still around today. Blood has been shed over the trestles and bridges that cross her. And many have dedicated their lives to the one whose blood was shed on the Cross for us by being Baptized in its waters.

She has been a boundary on properties for hundreds of years and still today her name is mentioned in Deed books, what she says goes. And still she meanders on doing what Lick Creek does. Kind of a mysterious creek I think. But, I wanted to know more . . . Lick Creek is west and a little north of Greeneville, in the northwest corner of present day Greene County,

Tennessee and runs to the northeast corner of the county. Some family names that settled on her banks before 1800 include the families of the Carter, Crumley, Doty, English, Conway, Gass, Hardin and Malone. Add Wagoner, Webster, English, Stanfield, Paterson and Morris. Before white man her banks were the favorite spot of the Woodland and Cherokee Indians to have their hunting camps and even their homes.

No wonder it was a favorite spot, with her prizes of Catfish and Venison since the Deer had chosen her banks as a home as well. I guess it's safe to say she has nurtured mankind and the animals around her. A "Mother Creek" hmmm. Now to get a little technical, this is the "proper" way to discuss her.

According to the USGS office their data states: This stream site, maintained by the USGS Tennessee Water Science Center (identifier USGS-TN), has the name "LICK CREEK NEAR MOSHEIM, TN" and has the identifier USGS-03466895.

This site is located in Greene County County, Tennessee at 36.24287706000000 degrees latitude and -82.94015850000000 degrees longitude using the datum NAD83.

The horizontal location collection method was "Interpolated from MAP." and the accuracy is 1 second. This site is at an elevation of 1060.59 feet .The Creek drainage area is 220 square miles. I'm like, "Alrighty then" . Lick Creek enters Greene County up about the Jearoldstown Community.

Jearoldstown sits on her 60 mile marker. Mile 57 is Pyburn. Mile 54 & 55 is Lost Mountain. Mile 50 is close to Locust Springs. Mile 45 near Wesley's Chapel and Kennytown. Nile 40 is in Ottway. Mile 35 is near Carter's Chapel.

Mile 25 is near Harmon's Chapel church, Mosheim area on Highway 11E. Mile 20 is Mohawk. Mile 10 is near Thula and Concord. Mile 6 is near Beulah and here she is starting to flow parallel somewhat with the Nolichucky where in Cocke county she empties her waters. Today, she holds in her bottom lands the Lick Creek Bottoms Wildlife Management Area.

Now, I don't know bout you. but I feel like I know Lick Creek a little better, but that does not change the fact that she will ever be changed or tamed by mankind. She's as beautiful and wild as she has ever been. Don't think I'd want her any other way!

And so it is, I find myself on this summer day, 2022, sitting on a grassy knoll off of John Graham road, out in fabulous Ottway, I watch the clouds roll by as Lick Creek performs the true meander.

Flowing over gently sloping ground, then she begins to curve back and forth across the landscape. The spirits of the Great Hunt are heard in the sounds of the tall swaying grasses, the chirping birds, and seen in the bashful deer and the soaring bald eagle.

Nature here, on the banks of Lick Creek is as it has always been, not proud or haughty, not arrogant or assertive. It is reflecting, expressing, and giving peace. The picture is Lick Creek where she starts which is located in the Lovelace community.



Wataugah, Nonachuckie, & Carter's Valley Settlements. So do you really wish you could have lived in the olden days? The misty fog that rises up and crawls throughout the hills and hollers during late summer mornings seem to be measuring up the landscape and calculating for the vibrant autumn that is soon to come.

The fog clutching the entire expanse has everything in its field of vision under a mystical appearance. They say if'n you look close enough into the foggy mist you might see their ghostly figures. The figures of those determined men and women who were the first white settlers into the lands we know today as upper east Tennessee. They say their ghosts still walk the city streets of Jonesborough, Greeneville and Elizabethton, looking for their home, looking for the Republic of Watauga.

Look deeper into the mystical mist and you will see the ghosts of the Cherokee Beloved Man and his band of Dahnawa Danatlihi (warriors). Their spirits are still makin' war and still makin' treaties. In these hills and hollers the warriors are said to be roaming and looking for trespassers on Cherokee lands. Gallivanting the white-water rapids just for good measure, because they can. Taking risks and taking lives their only chance to save their beloved homeland.

Back before Tennessee was even thought about and North Carolina was still a colony held by the British Crown. Back before the United States of America was a country even. This is a short story of the people who called this land home. The Cherokee who believed land is not something one should own, for it belongs to everyone.

The White Settlers who believe the dream is to own property, to control it just for one's use, as they see fit. It was during these times that settlers were pouring into this area. Back in 1752, and for eons before, what we know today as upper East Tennessee, was such, that the earth lay without much of its soil ever having been harrowed, since its void was turned into a creation. Indian villages and Indian towns up and down the Nolichucky Riverbanks dot the wilderness landscape.

A few long hunters and explorers have crossed the Appalachian Mountains. The first white people are just starting to come across the mountains and settle. Two races of people lived here, the natives, who could endure the climate, but were idle and passive, and the settlers who came from England, Scotland and Ireland and from the northern colonies of America, the latter being too poor to buy land there.

Some of these were refugees from justice, had fled from debt, or had left wife and children elsewhere and sometimes to escape the penalty of some crime. Horse thieves infested parts of this area. It was the great hideout for many outlaws of that day.

During these times the land of this area was Indian land and on this land is where the following accounts take place.

Here, where the state of Tennessee, its infancy was spent, and early statehood formed. The first republic established west of the Appalachians was the Watauga Association, which was formed in May 1772 under the shade of an old Sycamore tree, located on the banks of the Doe River in present day Elizabethton, Tennessee, Carter County.

They are told by the sibilant sea of the solemn Blue mountains whose summits ascend to the sky, Where, cradled in solitude, world weary pilgrims might find perfect rest, undisturbed by a sigh.

They told of savannahs as smooth as a carpet, of golden fruits breaking their branches in twain; Of vast flocks of wild fowl, the sunlight obscuring, And buffalo haunting the billowy plain. They told of a land where the sweet scented wildflowers Flash fair as the flame of a taper-lit shrine, Bedecking the meadows, bespangling the valleys, and climbing the mountains, the sun to outshine . . .

The story of the settlement named Watauga and the people who lived there, starts with the journey by a forty-eight year-old Scotch-Irish militia captain, planter, and long hunter named William Bean. Captain Bean and his wife Lydia Russell traveled the Great War Path, following the Appalachian Mountains southwest through the Shenandoah Valley, in the British Colony of Virginia, with their four children in tow.

The Bean family was accompanied by several other families. Bean is believed to be the first white man to permanently settle in the Tennessee frontier. Soon hundreds of families followed the Beans into the heart of the southwestern frontier to stake their claim in the glory-lands that would later become the Great State of Tennessee. The journey across the Appalachians was not an easy one.

The people told of climbing up indescribably steep mountains and "part of the way we had to crawl on hands and feet and sometimes we had to take the baggage and saddles and the horses and drag them up the mountains (for the horses were in danger of falling down backward—as we had once had an experience), and sometimes we had to pull the horses up while they trembled and quivered like leaves." recalled Bishop Spangenberg, one of the first to visit and explore.

Wagons hauling their every belongings had to be abandoned. What they could carry on their backs and in their arms is all they had when arriving at their new homes.

He went on to write in his journal, "Arrived at the top at last, we saw hundreds of mountain peaks all around us, presenting a spectacle like ocean waves in a storm. We refreshed ourselves a little on the mountain top, and then began the descent, which was neither so steep nor as deep as before, and then we came to a stream of water. Oh, how refreshing this water was to us! The next day we got into laurel bushes and beaver dams and had to cut our way through the bushes.

Then we came to a creek so full of rocks that we could not possibly cross it and on both sides were such precipitous banks that scarcely a man, certainly no horse could climb them. There were countless springs but no reeds, but so much grass land that Brother Antes thinks a man could make several hundred loads of hay of the wild grass. There is a magnificent chestnut and pine forest near here.

Whetstones and millstones which Brother Antes regards the best he has seen."

Cutting through the untamed jungles of mountain laurel and pushing farther and deeper into the dark unbroken forests Crossing mountain after mountain, and led by Capt Bean, the group settled on the Watauga River.

A short distance above the spot where Boone's Creek empties into the Watauga River, near present day Johnson City, Tennessee. Lt. John Bean, a brother of Capt. William Bean Jr, while on a hunting trip some years before, had built a small cabin on a Daniel Boone campsite. Boone was a good friend of the Bean brothers and they often hunted together. After arriving, Mrs. Bean gave birth to a son named Russell, the first white child born on the wilderness frontier.

Soon after, more and more European settlers began arriving and settling in the Watauga, Nolichucky, and Holston river valleys. The rich agricultural area along the Watauga River was known then as the Watauga Old Fields.

The name given by the Cherokee. Within a few years, the British government determined that the community of settlers violated the Treaty of Hard Labor, an agreement between British and Cherokee that established a line west of which white settlers were not to go. British authorities ordered the settlers back from Watauga. Not to be deterred, the Watauga settlers made their own agreement with the natives to lease the lands, and the community continued to prosper in spite of its outlaw status.

But they told of a cruel foe lurking in ambush. For whose treachery nothing but blood could atone. Of fierce Chickamaugas and Cherokee bowmen, Whose swift, stealthy darts sang a dirge all their own. But the rivers and mountains, the dim, distant mountains, Rising range upon range to the ultimate sky- Could women and children surmount those blue masses? Could even strong men defy those grim rock-cliffs?

Life on the frontier in upper east Tennessee was very hard. With worries of starvation due to crop failures to death by being burned at the stake or scalped by Indians during attacks, the determined men and women continued on making a life in the wilderness. In July 1776, the Cherokee invaded the Nolichucky, Holston, and Watauga settlements.

Although the settlers were chased out of Carter's Valley and the Nolichucky valley, the Holston settlers managed to thwart Dragging Canoe at the Battle of Island Flats, we know today as Kingsport, Tennessee. They murdered, scalped and carried into captivity the inhabitants. They burned their crops and drove off their animals.

The settlers fled in terror across the North Fork of Holston. The triumph of the Cherokees was short lived. Virginia and North Carolina joined hands and gathered a force of 1800 men at Long Island in the summer of 1776. The army was of such size that the Indians fled to the woods, and the command had to content itself with marching to the Cherokee towns of Little Tennessee and destroying them.

The Chiefs of the Cherokees hastened to treat for peace and at Long Island they agreed to deliver up all horses and prisoners and to refrain from attacking the settlements. Dragging Canoe, the Chief who headed the unruly portion of the tribe, alone held out and with his followers and the lawless Chickamauga Indians hid out in the mountains around Chattanooga. Nancy Ward, Beloved Cherokee Woman, had warned the Settlers at Watauga of the planned attacks.

Ward also used her powers as a Cherokee Beloved Woman to spare the life of Lydia Russell Bean (wife of early settler William Bean), who had been captured during the invasion and had been sentenced to be burned at the stake. The Cherokee laid siege to Fort Watauga for about two weeks before retreating.

According to stories told generation after generation, a picture is painted in our minds of the Bean cabin. The cabin or little fort stood very close to the river and on the side of the river where there are high rocky cliffs. It is said that the Indians used to come from down about the "Nolla Chuckey" river (Nolichucky River). Following an old trail that ran near this place.

Then up to the Watauga river, where there they would hide themselves on the high cliff opposite Bean's cabin and watch for a chance to shoot at some of them when they came out. Many stories are recorded about the Bean and other first families in their battles with the Indians. Another account of living in Watauga goes like this.

From a narrative of a man who lived long ago "One day as one of the girls was going to the spring an Indian lying high up on the opposite cliff picked her off with his long range rifle. The daughter of Bean was killed. Capt Bean determined to have revenge and so going down the river to the shoal he waded across and getting ahead of the Indians lay in ambush by the side of their trail and when they come in sight marching in single file he fired at the foremost warrior and killed him.

The Indians gathered up their dead brother and continued their march towards the Nona Chuckey. Bean ran off to one side and as he ran loaded his gun and then came in ahead of them he killed another 'heap good Indian.' They picked up this dead one and moved forward Bean ran in ahead of them again and getting a good chance fired and this time killed two at one shot! Four dead out of a band of perhaps eight so demoralized the remaining Indians that they broke and fled leaving the dead to bury the dead!"

On another occasion some of the boys told Bean that they had heard a turkey gobbler over on the cliff and asked if they might go over and shoot it. He told them no that if they went over there they would never get back alive.

Bean himself went down the river and crossing over at the shoals came up on this side and guided by the peculiar "gobble" of the turkey he slipped up towards the cliff with the stealthiness of a cat and there behind a log lay not a turkey gobbler but a great big Indian hidden behind a log and with his bead-like eyes fixed on the little fort across the Watauga watching for someone to come out so that he could shoot him. Bean put an extra charge of powder in his rifle and took a good dose himself to steady his nerves fired with deliberate aim and there was one more "good Indian" gone.

He then cut off the warrior's head and took it back over the river to the boys telling them "here is your wild turkey!" They rafted the rivers and conquered the Smokies, From whose peaks they first saw the new homes they had won. They girdled the forests, they drained the morasses. They builded of rude logs the Church and the Home Through labor and sorrow and sore tribulation — Faith for the foundation and love for the dome. And in tears and in blood, with the lead of the rifle.

The Saxon his deeds will continue to write. Life was hard work in the Settlements. It was not uncommon to see a few enterprising and adventurous men, clustered together on the banks of the remote and secluded Watauga River, the Nolichucky River or the Holston River, felling the forest, erecting cabins, forging society and laying the foundation of a government. Hostile Indian tribes had to be repelled.

An exposed frontier had to be guarded. Aggression had to be resisted, stations protected, forts defended and emigrants encouraged. Roads had to be opened through a trackless wilderness. Public buildings erected. A system of laws had to be enacted. Now, the Cherokee tribe of Indians, at this time inhabited one of the most attractive sections of the American Continent.

There were no fortresses to be found among them. Their settlements were rude huts scattered irregularly along some water way convenient to good pasture land and hunting and fishing grounds. They usually had small clearings which were cultivated by the women and children in Indian corn and beans. Their principal town or capital city was Choto, located about five miles from the ruins of Fort Loudon, Tennessee. The Cherokee were the mountain folk of America during these days. They frequently aided the early settlers, but more often they carried death into their homes This tribe, previous to 1769, were numerous and exceedingly quarrelsome and arrogant.

For years following the venture of the first settlers into this country the Cherokees killed and scalped the inhabitants at every opportunity. James Adair, an early Indian trader who lived with the Indians described them like this:

"I have known them to go a thousand miles for the purpose of revenge, in pathless woods, over hills and mountains, through large cane swamps full of grape-vines and briars, over broad lakes, rapid rivers and deep creeks and all the way endangered by poisonous snakes, if not by the rambling and lurking enemy, while, at the same time, they were exposed to the extremities of the

heat and cold, the vicissitudes of the season, to hunger and thirst, both by chance and their religiously scanty method of living when at war, to fatigue and other difficulties. Such is their revengeful temper that all these things they condemn as imaginary trifles, if they are so happy as to get the scalp of their enemy."

Two more settlements came about, the Nolichucky (original spelling of the river was Nonachunheh). Jacob Brown cut a deal with the Indians.

He also kept goods that the Indians favored thereby keeping them somewhat happy. Carter's Valley settlement was started about the time of the settlement on the Watauga. Several families settled in Carter's Valley. The first emigrants, Carter (whose name the valley still retains) and Parker, opened a store, which was robbed by the Indians ; the robbers were supposed to be Cherokees, but of this no proof was obtained.

For a time, the residents of each of these settlements had to leave their homes and live in the fort at the Watauga settlement due to Indian attacks. The sense of security following the destruction of the Cherokee towns brought all the old settlers and many new ones back to the valley. So keep in mind when you are out and about, maybe on a city street or maybe the back forty on your farm, maybe you re jest a'porch sittin' and you hear it.

You hear it just like your Mamaw said she heard over sixty years ago. The faint cries that whimper on the winds of the little girl's voice asking "Mommie why is he tearing off my pretty bonnet?" The loud unexplainable booms locals talk of hearing from time to time. One loud "BoOm" and followed by nothing. It is the sound of the blade making one single swipe starting at the forehead and ripping, careful with the blade . . .make it all one pretty piece . Oh! a red one too. The BoOmS will continually get louder and louder, as the sound of taking a scalp travels thought-out space and into infinity. The spirits of those first people who were determined . Those spirits of the Indian warriors who were so brave, all waited in infinity to return home.



A LITTLE ABOUT THE BELIEFS OF THE OLD TIME MOUNTAIN FOLK IN REGARDS TO WITCHES! In 1679 North Carolina law directed local officers to investigate felonies, witchcraft, enchantments, sorceries, and magic arts, among other crimes.

The next year, a woman in Perquimans Precinct was jailed on a charge of witchcraft. Court records describe such women as "concerned with familiar Spirits under ye Notion of a Witch." This caused folks especially in the mysterious mountains, already in fear to be even more suspicious and superstitious!

The early years of Phoebe Ward, witch, are shrouded in mystery. It is known that she was a woman of bad morals. No one seemed to know anything of her past. She was an old, old woman when this account begins. Phoebe Ward had no fixed home. She lived here and there first at one place and then at another in Northampton County, North Carolina. She stayed in a hut or any shelter whatsoever that was granted her. She made her living begging from place to place.

Most people were afraid to refuse her, lest she should apply her witchcraft on them. When she found a house at which people were particularly kind to her, there she stopped and abused their kindness. Hence the people resorted to a number of methods to keep her away. For instance, when they saw her coming they would stick pins pointing up into the chair-bottoms, and then offer her one of these chairs.

It is said that she could always tell when the chair was thus fixed and would never sit in it. Also, they would throw red pepper into the fire, and Phoebe would leave as soon as she smelled it burning.. Among her arts it is said that she could ride persons at night (the same as nightmares), that she could ride horses at night and that when the mane was tangled in the morning it was because the witch had made stirrups of the plaits.

She was said to be able to go through key-holes, and to be able to make a horse jump across a river as if it were a ditch. She was credited with possessing a sort of grease which she could apply, and then slip out of her skin and go out on her night rambles, and on her return get back again.

It is said that once she was making a little bull jump across the river, and as she said, 'Through thick, through thin; 'way over in the hagerleen, ' the animal rose and started. When he was about half way over, she said, 'That was a damn'd good jump,' and down the bull came into the river. (The witch is not to speak while the bull is crossing). The witch does not necessarily have to be old; young girls are sometimes initiated into the mysteries of the black art.

In North Carolina the daughter of a celebrated witch got into serious trouble by accompanying her mother on one of her midnight rambles, and quite often supernatural practices are a means of livelihood for the unprotected young virgin.

These witch-maids, however, may be identified by one skilled in the study of anatomy, for they frequently possess physical characteristics that differentiate them from the ordinary girl. The idea occurring in folk-lore and mythology all over the globe, attributes some sign of ugliness such as inverted knees or feet to malignant spirits. Sometimes the feet alone appear distorted, for some spirits are conceived of as wearing clothes, as is the witch, and therefore, since the feet only are exposed to public view, it is but fitting that they should be marked. (This from E.E. Bailey book published in 1920)

Witches may transform themselves into any bird or beast that suits their immediate cause/need. The Toad is a frequent figure in folklore. His bad reputation is established, and his association with witches is extremely long standing. Today there are few American witches who take the form of a toad, although it is a well-known fact in the old mountain folk that

"If you kill a toad, your cows will give bloody milk, a misfortune which often results from the plots of witches."

The mountain folk believed that witches had the power to injure the minds and bodies of men and women, to stunt the growth of children, to prevent the formation of butter and soap, and render fire-arms useless.

Witches were supposed not only to lay their evil influences upon human beings but also upon hogs, cattle, fowls, cats, dogs, and the like. If a cow went 'dry', the witches were often charged with it. If the hogs or the cattle became diseased, the witches were supposed to have been exercising their spells and the witch doctor was called in to try to restore them.

The old folk believed if a witch had possession of one's personal belongings they could use it to cast a spell upon that person. They had the fear of giving anything to a witch or loaning anything to a witch. Or anyone who was thought might be a witch. So it was not cool back in those days to ask to borrow anything! You might be thought to be a witch if'n you did.

Just as parts of the body may be used to produce spells, so the spell may be broken by taking the clippings of the toe and fingernails of the person the spell was cast upon and burying them at midnight at the foot of a white oak-tree.

Maidenhair fern, mixed with the fodder, will make bewitched cattle give milk. It was believed that Witches, in their nocturnal rambles, often "ride" humans. It is told that a girl was "pressed to death" by a witch who came night after night and sat upon her chest . The witch was in the form of a black cat.

They believed that sometimes the witch's mount was a transformed human being, transformed by means of a magic bridle, and sometimes it was an ordinary horse. If the first is the case, the next morning the "ridden" one will find his toes and fingers covered with dirt, his limbs scratched, and his strength exhausted; if the latter is the case, the following day the animal will be edgy and fatigued, and will be found to have tangles in its mane, commonly known as "witch- stirrups".

There is so much more to this story about witches you'll have to stay tuned and watch for my posts. And maybe, Good Lord willing, I can publish a book of these stories one day! Thanks for reading, for your support, your comments and your shares! I appreciate each one of you! You're the best!



Busting Ghosts With West Virginia's Paranormal Investigators

Written By Zachary Emmanuel Republished with permission from <https://www.countere.com/> & <https://www.saucierstudios.com/>¹

In Appalachia, ghost hunters keep the state's past alive—and are an essential part of its society.

¹ Artwork by Ben Saucier

For the past year, *Countere* has had the privilege of shadowing some of West Virginia's most elite ghost hunters, the Spectral Research and Investigation (SRI) team. We hopped around a West Virginia-shaped bingo board of horror movie tropes: a haunted house, a former insane asylum, and a family which claimed demonic possession of their young daughter. We discovered that in West Virginia, a paranormal investigator plays many roles: an amateur scientist, a tourist draw, an Appalachian historian, and even a social worker and family counselor. We're pleased to present our dispatches below.

SRI is not the only elite ghost hunting team in Appalachia—there's West Virginia Paranormal Investigations, Paranormal Quest, Paranormal Investigation Team, and a multitude of other Facebook pages and YouTube channels. In fact, the state's paranormal scene is arguably the most vibrant in the country. It's an essential part of West Virginia's tourism industry: two of the biggest landmarks in the state are the Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum and West Virginia Penitentiary; the West Virginia Bigfoot Museum opened in 2021, joining the ranks of the Mothman Museum, the Flatwoods Monster Museum, and the Archive of the Afterlife (also known as "The National Museum of the Paranormal"); and the state held its first-ever Paranormal Tourism Conference this year.

<https://youtu.be/sxnpShnfWc0>

"15 years ago, it was a lot harder to open people up to the idea of paranormal West Virginia," says Brian Clary, the founder of SRI. "Television has softened that up." Yet while ghost-hunting TV shows provide plenty of exposure to haunted West Virginia, Brian has guided his SRI team in a different direction. "Many TV shows are more into the entertainment side than the scientific side," Brian states. "I want to take it into the curiosity side. We don't know with certainty that we can prove ghosts exist, and in many cases we try to disprove paranormal claims. But we're using tech that has been proven reliable—detecting electromagnetic frequencies, heat anomalies, motion detectors—and trying to create a new kind of group, combining science with history and folklore."

In 2020, Brian created SRI with co-founder Theresa Racer-Cheshire. Both in their 30s, they have over 40 years of combined experience doing paranormal investigations. What they lack in lights, budget, and cameras, they make up for in devotion. Theresa runs a "Haunted History of the Tri-State" blog which details, painstakingly, the lore of hundreds of haunted sites. Brian is a high school social studies & special education teacher studying for his PhD in History. SRI conducts on average one paranormal investigation a month, into former hospitals, banks, hotels, and other long-dead businesses in West Virginia. In an abandoned state where folklore reigns supreme and "history lives big alongside you," as Brian says, they are not just chasing ghosts, but keeping the spirits of West Virginia's past alive.

The William Edgar Haymond House

Countere first accompanied the Spectral Research and Investigation team to their overnight visit at the William Edgar Haymond House in Sutton, WV. Darkness fell as we arrived. Brian, Theresa, and James Ward, a 21-year-old former student of Brian's, were deep in conversation with the house's current owner, who opened the place in 2019 to paranormal investigators & public events. "She's just letting us know what happened last night," Theresa says pleasantly. "They had a few ghost hunters leave in the middle of the night, they got intimidated by Mr. Haymond."

Mr. Haymond, born 1855, was an affluent lawyer and Democratic politician, one of the richest and most influential men in town. His megalithic house is rife with lore, such as a secret passageway from the maid's quarters to his private bathtub (ahem) and a creepy "Blue Room" in which his presumably unhappy first wife, Emma, slept. It also stands amidst the site of a fiery Civil War skirmish.

SRI runs a tight ship. Theresa brings the archives, scouring local libraries for newspaper records and house deeds, and also serves as the resident psychic. She gives context to what we might encounter tonight: "Emma possibly passed away in the house," she says, riffling through her notes. "And there's been sightings of a grey-haired old lady, in addition to the very masculine presence of who we presume to be Mr. Haymond."



James and Theresa's husband, JR, strap up with recording equipment. Brian coordinates logistics, lays out the tools on the table, and directs the investigation for the night. "We're going to put the Tesla coil in Mr. Haymond's house, turn on all the cameras," he orders. "We'll put motion detectors—one on the stairs, one on the second floor where Emma was known to walk back and forth, one in the attic. We'll

keep voice recorders and EMF detectors on us all night.”

- James Ward

When it comes to science, modern paranormal theory often concerns electromagnetic fields (EMF). The supposition is that spirits are manifestations of energy, and detecting energy anomalies can help validate the presence of ghosts. High EMF caused by faulty wiring or power lines can also lead to symptoms that can be mistaken for the supernatural, such as fear, hallucinations, hostility, and the feeling of “someone else being in the room.”

EMF-related equipment allow ghost hunters to sift through paranormal claims—seeing if the source is manmade or not—and also find any hoax devices planted by a business owner eager to draw in some tourists, which does happen occasionally.

While there exists an entire market of high-tech, ghost-hunting equipment as-seen-on-TV, the SRI team takes a more DIY approach. They build most of their equipment from scratch or borrow it from other fields. “We don’t have the big fancy budgets,” Brian says. “If somebody throws out these new pieces of equipment, that’s great and dandy, but I don’t know if that’ll fit into what we’re doing. This equipment here has been around for years, and it’s reliable.” He beckons to the table, strewn with tools:



- **EMF Detector** — Checks for rogue electromagnetic fields in the house which might indicate that a spirit is nearby.
- **Ovilus X** — Takes electromagnetic field signals and translates them into words, supposedly. The theory is that an entity can manipulate the EMF fields to communicate with the living.
- **Kestrel Weather Detector** — Measures ambient environmental factors such as temperature, humidity, wind speed, the moon, barometric pressure, gravitational anomalies, and more. The intention is to check for temperature variations: cold spots are associated with paranormal activity, as spirits will consume heat and energy.
- **Parabolic Microphone** — Tracks the direction of sound and amplifies it.

- **RF Detector** — Detects hidden electronics and see “if someone’s trying to pull a fast one on us,” as Theresa says.
- **Tesla Coil** — Increases the amount of electromagnetic radiation in the room; the theory is that raising the amount of energy can help spirits manifest themselves. Hand-built by Brian.
- **“Radio Shack Hack”** — Rigged radio that cycles quickly between stations and hopes to pick up words or phrases communicated by a spirit.
- **Simple Noise Machine** — Produces white noise as a baseline sound. The theory is that a consistent source of noise will charge up any entities that are present.
- **Motion detectors** — Tracks all motion within 15 ft.
- **Walkie-Talkies** — Walking alone in abandoned buildings at night can be psychologically terrifying. Walkie-talkies maintain communication when cell phone service fails.

For the rest of the night and into the morning, SRI investigates the house using their tools, purposefully placing themselves in the creepiest situations possible: recreating Emma’s journey from the “Blue Room” to the “Pink Room” where her children stayed, turning on the Tesla coil and asking Mr. Haymond if he was in the room with us, sitting in pitch black in the attic.

To fill the darkness and quiet, Brian and Theresa elaborate on bits of paranormal theory. For example, Haymond’s wife Emma has frequently been spotted crossing the hall to the children’s room. “That could be a residual haunting,” Theresa says. “Some people think the soil stores energy, and batteries drain energy over time. The idea is that the ground, the wood, the running water, they store energy and play it back over a long amount of time, and that is what we are seeing.” Reasonable enough, but what about the minutiae of “shadow people?” “When most people think of them, they think of a tall man. But there’s also a class of shadow people that are 2-4 feet tall.”

As creepy as that sounds, Brian is careful to spell out the differences between entities. The first types of hauntings are residual, like a record being played over and over again. The second type are what he calls “benevolent spirits.” These will often go out of the way to make themselves known: slamming a door, opening a door. They want your attention, apparently, but won’t go so far as to harm you, and generally lack mean-spiritedness.

“The third,” Brian says more gravely, “are the malevolent spirits. These are the most controversial. These deal with demonic possessions, the inhuman. They were called ‘Elementals’ in ancient Ireland. These are more willing to make themselves known by harm—the poltergeist route.”

Luckily, malevolent spirits are few and far between. The most scares we'll encounter that night involve suspicious bangs, a footstep overhead, the inexplicable gust of wind. While SRI does take steps to stay tempered—they will first offer a rational explanation for the burps and creaks of an old house—many ghost-hunting tools in general are designed to produce results. The Ovilus will always emit words, and a parabolic microphone can make a distant peep sound like demon breath.

However, Brian and Theresa are true believers in their work, and they seem a little disappointed by the ghostly inactivity this time around. Before bed, Brian fiddles with the cameras; he will pore over a dozen hours of footage in the coming weeks, hoping to have documented *something*. Theresa has been seeing ghosts since childhood—she recounts once asking a spirit to follow her home because it was bothering people at a restaurant. “I’ve never felt threatened enough or had a negative experience,” she says. “Fear is a powerful emotion, and if you show fear, then they can feed off that. I just didn’t give into it. I’ve always been drawn to the weird and macabre, which helps me teach people to not be afraid of what they’re experiencing.”

[Florida’s Bigfoot: The Legend of the Skunk Ape]

The House Call

The life of a ghost hunter in West Virginia isn’t all haunted houses and insane asylums. It also involves acting as a paranormal social worker and making house calls. Around a third of Brian and Theresa’s investigations have been visits to private residences. Unfortunately, some of these households contained separate but related issues: drug addiction, child abuse, mental illness. The SRI team recalls calling Child Protective Services in some extreme cases: “I’ve seen heroin, I’ve seen abuse, neglect, I’ve seen all that,” Theresa says. “Some of the things you just walk in on folks over the years, it’s unreal.”

However, in West Virginia, where infrastructure is crumbling, mistrust of government runs high, and spooky stories are part of the state’s DNA, ghost hunters can sometimes feel like the *only* safe option to call. Ghost hunting diagnostic equipment has genuinely helped some families fix severe electrical issues, Brian says, and they can serve as an outside mediator to domestic issues. Oftentimes, they help just by “listening to the client’s story and letting them know they aren’t crazy.”

Countere accompanied SRI on one such house call, keeping the family’s identity anonymous and changing their names for this story. At a pizza shop in central West Virginia, Brian outlined the job to the team. A family believed their daughter was possessed and there was a demonic presence in the house. “She called me just this

morning, told me she had been up all night. She asked me, 'Have you ever been inside a house that bleeds oil through the walls?'"

A half-hour later, we pull up to a frowning house nestled on a hill under sagging power-lines. Stacy, an emaciated blonde woman waiting in the front yard, is already a nervous wreck: "There's things running up the stairs, things under the neighbor's porch. There was a swinging monkey creature in the trees last week!" Stacy and her partner, George, are visibly at war—George is eyeing us suspiciously the whole time—but both agree they saw *something* like that in the woods. A hardened man of little words, George also no longer goes upstairs alone.

Inside the house, Amy shows us a blood spot above the corner of a door. Her 6-year-old daughter Jenny squeals into the room, cradling a pet bird. After greeting the child, the team asks for privacy and sits down with Jenny. Theresa hands her a sketch pad and some crayons.

"Show us what kind of things are going on," Theresa says gently. "Is there anything bothering you? Does anything make you sad? Anything you think could be better?"

Jenny answers yes to every question. "Now Jenny," Theresa says, "We hear there's an invisible friend named Bill." Jenny looks down. Yeah, she says sadly: "Bill is always on the back porch. But the Shadow-Man controls Bill and talks to him."

Brian asks Jenny to draw us the Shadow-Man. She scribbles on the sketch pad for a minute and holds it up. "This is my house, and this is the Shadow-Man."

Jenny frowns and looks like she wants to cover her ears and eyes. "I like everything in the world," she says meekly. "But I don't like when someone is creeping up on me."

Brian examines the picture. "There's something strange here," he says after a while. "I just don't know what it is yet." Brian, Theresa, and James gather their equipment and begin canvassing the house. As the trio walks up the stairs, Jenny yells up after them: "We're coming!"

The team exchange startled looks. Brian walks down the stairs, kneels besides Jenny, and asks her what she meant. She looks down and says it was an accident.

Upstairs, the attic is suffocatingly hot and crowded with junk. Almost immediately after entering, the team's EMF detectors begin beeping, indicating the presence of harmful radiation. "This is crazy!" Brian exclaims. "40 milligauss is considered harmful. This is hitting 1000!" Throughout the rest of the house, the readings are similarly extreme. "I shouldn't see a ceiling fan at 300. This is unhealthy."

The team walks into the backyard. “I have *never* seen a house with such high EMF levels, in all my investigations. All under those,” Brian declares in disbelief. He points upwards at the big, fraying power lines which canopy the block. “Stacy said all the neighbors around here are angry and miserable,” Theresa says.

Brian calls Stacy outside. He takes his hat off, wipes his sweat, and begins to speak. “This investigation has taken a shift from what I thought it was going to be,” he says. “I’m seeing EMF numbers coming off those lines that are significantly harmful to health. Even if there’s something paranormal in this house, it’s feeding off this electromagnetism and all this negative energy. It’s got an unlimited food source.”

“The paranormal side of this is a secondary concern at this point,” Brian continues assuredly. “My concern is with all you at this point. There are levels of electricity in this house that I’ve never seen before.”

Theresa offers to refer the family to an electrician. “With the wiring this bad, this house is a fire hazard as well,” she tells Stacy. “It’s extremely unsafe. Your primary thing is to get out of your house.”

Stacy folds her arms and looks at the ground, disappointed. “Not happening anytime soon,” she spits out, jerking her head towards her partner across the yard. “Now that ole Skippy over there ran through all the money. Six thousand dollars, all my savings, he lost in Dogecoin in three weeks.” She looks down at the pet bird, peeping in a shoebox. “Your family don’t give a shit about you either.”

Brian looks defeated for a minute, then perks up. “We can still do *something*,” he says. “My grandmother was full-blooded Mi’kmaq Indian. There were so many Native American tribes that lived within this region, that instead of a traditional Catholic ceremony, it would be more appropriate to do something that worked in this region before Christianity.”

Brian lights a small tuft of white sage. “As time went on, I picked up bits and pieces from my grandmother,” he says. “This smoke is supposed to attach to any negative things with you and take them as it leaves toward the great Fathers, and cleanses the area of which we are now apart.” With the rest of the family assembled, Brian performs a Mi’kmaq smudging



ceremony. The smoke rolls off Stacy, whose blue eyes betray a small hint of hope. It drifts beyond the power-lines and up into the sky.

[Native American Ghost Stories]

As we leave, Brian lets out a long sigh. “There could be something paranormal in this house, but the primary problem is EMF poisoning and family dynamics. I want to help these folks, but I don’t know if this is a helpable situation. At least by people on the outside.”



Old Hospital on College Hill

Editor’s Note: The Old Hospital on College Hill in Williamson, WV, is another haunted landmark that granted SRI private access for an overnight investigation. The author’s notes indicate that unlike the other two locations, a possibly genuine paranormal event was experienced.



There are a few sentences in the beginning of the author’s notes that are legible. A quote from Theresa is written down: “It’s totally unscientific, but I get the sense that someone down here is worried about a watch.” After that, it appears the team moved to an upstairs room. In an effort to be faithful to our investigation, we’ve reproduced what we could of the author’s few remaining notes:

“We all lie down. Turn of all phones. Taunting even. Won’t be scared. Then suddenly a clear mans voice ahhhh. We all freak out and clump together and scamper back. temp drop. We hear footsteps coming up the stairs, and sounds all around the walls: there’s one. There’s one. The Ovilus speaks: Innocent. Murdered.. Bat!!! flies around the room. Brian and

I see the same oval shaped head, pinkish orange.”

After that, the author’s notes become garbled and illegible beyond comprehension, and he refused in no uncertain terms to discuss them. Our dispatch thus ends. However, to offer a clearer picture of the Old Hospital on College Hill, we have also provided pictures of the facility.

Epilogue

This summer, *Countere* concluded our fieldwork with the Spectral Research and Investigation team. We accompanied them as they performed a dual investigation of the Fairfield County Infirmary in Lancaster, OH, with West Virginia Paranormal Investigations (WVPI). WVPI brought a much more high-tech setup—think tactical vests and professional cameras—and human proxy experiments, such as chaining yourself up, covering your eyes and ears, and speaking aloud any messages received.

While much more “evidence” can be captured this way, it puts into perspective the previous experience of mine at College Hill, which I still refuse to discuss—no one would ever believe me—but was only achieved after we turned off all the technology and sat in the dark. Even then, there has to be a “rational” explanation for such events: mass hallucination, triggered by lack of sleep and sensory deprivation.



However, it can't be missed that the experience only occurred after we turned off the phones and cameras.

Perhaps that's the whole point of paranormal phenomena: they *can't* be replicable by any sort of scientific process—their very nature is un-replicable. Perhaps the very idea of a ghost hunter is antithetical, attempting to capture what by definition cannot be captured.

But there's much more to the life of a West Virginian paranormal investigator. The SRI team has grown to eight members, and there's always a new investigation to do, always a new family to assist, always a new place opening up in West Virginia that hopes to attract tourists, remind them of the past, and hopefully make a few dollars. And sometimes, in the dead of night and at the height of fear, something otherworldly occurs.

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Art by Ben Saucier courtesy of [Saucier Studios](#)



Mountain Folk Forage: Pine Trees

By Aimee LaFon

***Disclaimer: I am not a doctor, nor do I pretend to be. This article is informative and only covers the traditional uses for edible plants commonly found in the Appalachian region. It's always best to consult a health care professional or medical doctor when suffering from any ailment, disease, illness, or injury before trying any traditional folk remedies. ***

Nothing says early winter like a pine tree, whether you're making wreaths, picking out scented candles for the season, or hauling in a fresh Christmas tree to decorate with family or friends.

However, few people know how delicious, healthy, and practical the pine tree can be these days!

Almost all pine trees are edible. Their bark, needles, resin, and pollen, are packed with vitamins and antioxidants and have many medicinal uses. In addition, pine needles and bark are useful for basketry and other structural items.

About Pine Trees



Medicinal Properties: antiseptic, astringent, inflammatory, antioxidant, expectorant

Varieties of Pine in Appalachia:

- Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*, or “Cone Pine”)
- Pitch Pine (*Pinus rigida*, or “Rigid Pine”)
- Virginia Pine (*Pinus virginiana*)
- Red Pine (*Pinus resinosa*, or “Resinous Pine”)
- Shortleaf Pine (*Pinus echinata*, or “Prickly Pine”)
- Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*, or “Torch Pine”)
- Table Mountain Pine (*Pinus pungens*, or “Stinky Pine”)

In Appalachia’s earliest history, pine trees were a staple in crafting, medicine, and food, especially in late fall and winter.

Pine trees produce pine nuts, abundant pollen that you can use as flour, and a nutritious inner layer of bark that you can boil to make noodles.

Since pine trees are evergreen and stay vibrant all year, they made an excellent overwinter food source for indigenous Americans within and beyond Appalachia.

As a medicine, pine needles and bark are effective in bolstering the immune system, thanks to their incredibly high concentrations of vitamin C. In fact, pine needles are still the main ingredient in Tamiflu.

As recorded in Kay Moss’s *Southern Folk Medicine*, pine was a very common ingredient in many medicinal treatments. It was used in concoctions to treat venereal diseases, dropsy, swelling, the “yaws” (*country distemper*, often supposed to be scurvy or syphilis), blisters, coughs, skin infections, and many more conditions.

While pine tips, or the fresh shoots of the pine tree, were the most common medicinal ingredient in the 1800s, the resins and tar from pine trees made a fantastic base for almost any medicine.

Pine bark could make a naturally antiseptic bandage, and pine tar made blister plasters, an antiseptic ointment, and liquid bandages. It also functions well as a natural glue.

Pine was also one of the earliest “perfumes” – though the dried and ground pollen, bark, and needles were originally rubbed on the body to mask human odors for hunting purposes.

Beyond medicines, pine needles have long been a popular material in basketry.

Which Pines are Edible?

All pine trees except the Norfolk island pine, Western Yellow Ponderosa Pine, Bull Pine, and Black Jack Pine are edible. However, be aware that lookalikes like Yew trees are toxic.

All of the most common Appalachian forest pine are edible, but check for the proper bark structure, the number of needles in each fascicle, and needle structure.

If the needles do not grow in clusters, it's safe to say that you are not dealing with a pine tree but, instead, another type of evergreen.

How To Identify and Harvest Pine

Pine trees differ from other trees because they have needle-shaped leaves that grow in clusters and grow both male and female cones.

Pine Cones



(Left) Male Eastern White Pine cones with pollen, and (right) female Eastern White Pine Cone

The female cones are the pine cones that everyone is familiar with. On the other hand, the male cones appear near the end of each branch as bulbous little berry-like structures that produce pollen to fertilize the female cones.

Pine Bark



(Left) White pine bark and (right) Red Pine bark

The most notable characteristic of a mature pine tree is its bark, which divides into furrows that look similar to large, patchy scales.

These scales appear in different patterns depending on the specific variety of pine.

For example, the Eastern White Pine's bark generally has very thick scales with straight furrows between each patch.

The red pine, however, has large, curving red scales that flake off regularly.

Needles and Fascicles of Appalachian Pines

Unlike other evergreens, pine trees have long needles that grow in clusters called **fascicles**. These fascicles have a bark-like cap near the pine's branch, keeping each needle secure.

Most pines either have two, three, or five needles per fascicle.

For example:

- The Virginia pine and Shortleaf pine have two needles per fascicle
- The Pitch pine, Red pine, and Loblolly pine have three needles per fascicle



- The Eastern White pine has five needles per fascicle
- The Table Mountain pine has between two and three needles per fascicle

Some pines, like the pitch pine, grow needles along the trunk, not just on the branches. That characteristic of pitch pine makes it easy to identify.

How To Prepare and Use Pine



Pine Needle Tea

Pine needle tea is one of the easiest things to make with pine. To make it, just wash off some fresh, green pine needles or tips, then steep them in hot water for around 10 minutes.

Pine needle tea is perfect for sick days, as pine needles contain plenty of vitamin C and antioxidants. Despite these medicinal benefits, pine tea is just good! Add some honey if you don't love bitter teas.

Coiled Pine Baskets



Pine needle baskets are some of the oldest baskets in the history of the world.

The oldest known basket is a coiled basket found in the Jude Desert, and it dates back to the neolithic period circa 9,000 BCE!

However, pine needle coiled basketry is a North American art. Pine needle basket making was common among the Native Americans in the area we now call Appalachia on the Southeastern side of the USA.

As an Appalachian, there's no better way to get in touch with my local history – and enjoy the pine-fresh scent on my evenings after work – than to make pine baskets!

What You'll Need To Make A Coiled Pine Needle Basket



You don't need anything too fancy to start your basket. All you need are:

- Plenty of dry pine needles
- A container to soak your needles in
- A plastic straw or tube of some sort. I'm using a Dunkin Donuts straw since it is wide and very strong.
- Some twine, craft thread, ribbon, embroidery floss, sinew thread, or cotton crochet thread - or any other string. I will use cotton crochet thread size 10 for this tutorial since it is strong and gives my baskets a nice subdued natural look.

- A needle that can accommodate your thread. I will use a small tapestry needle, but you can use a plastic tapestry needle, bone needle, embroidery needle, bookbinding needle, or sewing needle.

1. Harvest Your Pine Needles

When making a pine needle basket, you want to harvest the already-dead leaves from the tree's base.

Fresh pine needles are full of moisture; as they dry, they will shrink. If you use these fresh needles, each coil of your basket will shrink over time, making your stitches too loose to hold the basket together.

Plus, choosing the dead needles is better for the tree, anyway. I suggest taking more than you will need. Grab a whole bunch! You can always use the leftovers for another project or place some outside as mulch.

2. Soak Your Pine Needles for Around an Hour



Pine needles are pretty flexible, but as they dry out, they become too brittle to make baskets with.

Soaking them for 30 minutes to an hour with warm water before you begin coiling will make them more flexible and keep them from snapping as you sew them into your basket.

I like to soak mine in a plastic shoe box since it's easy to clean, and I can always pop the lid on when I want to take a break.

However, don't soak the needles for more than a day at a time. If you soak them too long, they'll lose all their strength and decay. Working with over-hydrated pine needles is like trying to sew around a cooked noodle – they will split, break off, and be slimy.

So, if you hit a natural stopping point in your work and want to pick it up another day, drain the water from your needles and allow them to dry. Then, add more water to the container when you want to work on your basket again.

3. Prepare and Fill Your Straw Gauge



The straw I recommended you get earlier will work as an easy way to keep your pine needles in a circular “tube” shape, and it will make it easier for you to add more pine needles as you work around your basket.

So, to start, take some pine needles out of your soaking container, and find the “fascicle,” the dark bark-like sleeve around the base of the needles’ bunches.

Pull these dark sleeves off of the needles – I find that a quick scrape with my fingernail is the fastest method – to remove your pine needles from their bundles.

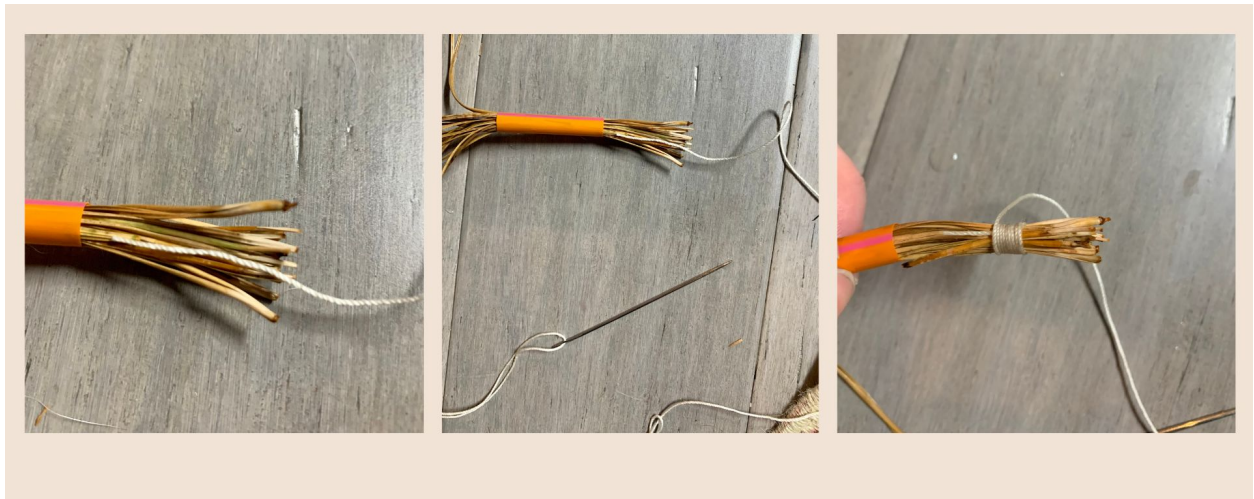
Then pack your pine needles into your straw or tube, pushing plenty in until your straw is full.

Now, you shouldn't pack the straw too tightly or too loosely. The straw should be easy to slide over your needles, but it shouldn't fall off when you shake your little bundle.

Also, as you sew in your coils in the following steps, **you will need to add more needles**. Try to keep the pressure inside your straw gauge nice and tight as you go, and as it gets looser, just push in more needles.

Keeping the coil size consistent will ensure that your basket comes out in a nice, symmetrical shape.

4. Start The Beginning Coil



To start your basket, you want a tight, thread-dense coil to work as your basket's strong "anchor."

To create this first coil:

1. Thread your needle with a few feet of thread.
2. Take the end of your thread and arrange it into your bundle of needles, with the raw edge of the thread pointing away from the pine needles' base.
3. Hold the end of the thread in the bundle tightly.
4. Wrap your thread around the bundle tightly at least 10 times. You should be wrapping it over that tail end and the entire bundle of pine needles.
5. Keep wrapping until you have a few centimeters of fully coiled needles.

5. Sew in the Foundation Loop



Once you have a few centimeters of wrapped pine needles, you need to create the foundation loop with your coil. Here's how to do it:

1. Pinch your fully coiled needles into a coil or loop.

2. Hold the loop tightly with your fingers, then take your sewing needle in your other hand.
3. Push the sewing needle into the area where you began coiling in step 4, then pull it tight. You can make several extra stitches around this joint to make it more secure.

You should now have a tight, fully coiled loop, which will serve as the center of your basket.

6. Create One More Densely Coiled Section

Now that you have your beginning loop, things will get easier!

Take your needle and thread and wrap the string around your pine needles about 10 more times, keeping your wraps very tight.

Once you have a small section, push it against your beginning loop, curve it around, and set it flush with your foundation loop.

Then, insert your needle into the center of the coil. Push the needle through the coiled pine needles, then pull it tight to secure it. Now, it's time to start the stitch pattern.

7. Start the Simple Stitch Pattern



To create a simple radiating spiral pattern with your stitches, you'll need to stagger your stitches evenly as you coil the needles around your foundation loop.

To make this process easy, here's what to do:

1. Loop your thread around your pine needles from the inside of the basket to the outside.
2. Look at your foundation coil, and count 4 to 5 loops from your last stitch.
3. Insert your needle between the 4th and 5th loops from your foundation loop.
4. Wrap your thread around the coil from the inside of the basket to the outside again.
5. Count the next four loops around your foundation coil, then insert your needle between the 4th and 5th loops.
6. Repeat the process until you come full circle, back to where you started this stitch pattern.

Your basket should look like this now:



8. Keep Coiling Following the Stitch Pattern



To keep this stitch pattern, keep wrapping once, then stitching. You should insert your needle right next to the thread on your previous layer so each wrap of the thread lines up, creating a radial appearance.

Then, just keep coiling!

9. Create Walls When You Are Ready

When you want your basket to start sloping up, simply pinch your bundled pine needles in place as you sew them in.

I went with a very straight-walled appearance for this basket, so I simply pinched my pine needle bundle on top of my previous layer, then sewed it into place.

However, you can create almost any shape with your coiling.

Die-Hard Skeptic

By Paradis Perdu (Charles Richey) ©1993

I'm a Johnny-come-lately die-hard skeptic.
Got an ulcer, I think it's peptic.
Tell me what you truly believe.
I'll listen a while then get up and leave.

I once bought me this one owner car.
Salesman said it hadn't been driven real far
By the little old lady who drove it to church
Guaranteed not to leave me in the lurch.

Stick out your tongue
Blow your nose
Climb another rung
Anything goes.

This fella sold me some ocean front land
High up on a Tennessee ridge.
He financed it, really gave me a hand
Then he showed me this real nice bridge.

They tell me that the check is in the mail
And trouble always gives a warning.
Her love for me will never ever fail

She'll still respect me in the morning.

Stick out your neck

Do the daily grind

Bounce another check

Cover your behind.

Don't you know that I'm truly sorry

For everything that I've done wrong

Van Gogh thought the sky was starry

And I thought this was a song.

Stick out your chin

Blow your mind

Walk right on in

See what you can find.

An Ode

By Sydney Hamilton

Skinny dog, shakin' like a leaf,
howlin' under a haloed moon.
Down 192, leaving the Gorge,
Skinny dippin', Cumberland is insight.
I wish she'd love me like I know she could.
A red-headed stranger sings her trout mountain song.
Maybe it was a dream, maybe my lady left me.
For my good friends, tired and dove,
the levee step leads to my cost of livin',
the moon will light the way.
The edge of the Earth hugs the cave, small.
We wait for the trains, like we are tumbleweeds or timber yards.
There is something coming,
Like kudzu, it creeps, and it smothers,
takin' more away from their mothers.
Swallowing the South, in the waters, I wade.
May my mouth never shun, but embrace the shine,
O'er this land that is not mine.
Red-Hearted and Red-Lined,
We are just livin' on that on that red mountain time.