



Chattooga Quarterly

Spring ♦♦♦ 2015



MARTIN CREEK

In November 1796, Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins is believed to have crossed Martin Creek while traveling west on the Cherokee Trading Path through Stecoe Village, which was located at the “Dividings” in present day Clayton, Georgia.

Oil painting by Philip Juras www.philipjuras.com

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Director's Page

Nicole Hayler

Friends, thank you very much for your ongoing support during last year's hiatus in publishing the *Chattooga Quarterly*. Publication is hereby revived for 2015, and we also have finally entered the social networking scene by establishing Facebook, Pinterest and Instagram accounts. This new social media outreach is intended to work in unison with the *Chattooga Quarterly* by highlighting the Chattooga Conservancy's work, and naturally it will be useful for posting events and opportunities for involvement in our programs, as well as for broadcasting alerts such as the need to submit comments on Forest Service plans and proposals for our public lands in the Chattooga River watershed. We're redesigning our website too, and switching to a new platform that will facilitate our ability to post content quickly. Also, I am pleased to announce that these changes and additions have been spearheaded by two new staff members hailing from the "millennial generation" who have joined the Chattooga Conservancy's work force: Kelly Cochran as administrative assistant, and Taylor Howard as environmental / land trust attorney and program associate; thus, we are well-positioned to invigorate our organization's charge to protect, promote and restore the incredible Chattooga River watershed.

Because recent outreach was scant while much has been happening, I will use the remainder of this page as a mini update, and present a selective outline of some elements of the Chattooga Conservancy's ongoing program of work for 2015.

Monitoring the U. S. Forest Service

Seventy percent of the 190,000-acre Chattooga River watershed is national forest land, so oversight of Forest Service proposals is a constant. In the Georgia portion of the watershed, the Forest Service has just released a voluminous environmental assessment that aims to justify and permit a major timber harvesting, burning and road construction project in the Warwoman Creek watershed. In North Carolina, the agency is revising the "forest plan" for the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest, that will dictate what happens on public lands in the Chattooga's headwaters for the next 10 years. In SC, expected soon is a proposal to increase commercial use within the wild & scenic river corridor, which likely will merit opposition because the Chattooga's "wild and scenic experience" already suffers from over-commercialization. Still pending in SC is a decision on building boater access trails through the Chattooga's fragile headwaters. And also in SC, we are continuing with our Native Cane Restoration Project in



This spring we transplanted about 80 river cane culms into the native cane restoration site.

cooperation with the Andrew Pickens Ranger District and have just finished transplanting about 80 river cane culms into the project area, which is located inside the wild and scenic river corridor near the Chattooga Old Town site.

Stekoa Creek Park Our mammoth project to build a new city park and restore the ecological values on the park tract, which is located next to Stekoa Creek in Clayton, GA, is coming down the home stretch! A formal opening ceremony will be announced soon, and we hope that you can attend and join in the celebration. Now, much ongoing work involves implementing the stewardship plan for the Stekoa Creek Park.

Stekoa Creek Watershed Management Plan We are working under contract with the GA Department of Natural Resources and on behalf of the City of Clayton to research and write a Watershed Management Plan (WMP) for the Stekoa Creek watershed. The WMP will identify the hot spots of pollution in the Stekoa watershed, and describe a variety of management measures that could improve water quality. Importantly, when completed, the Stekoa WMP will allow applying for future competitive state and federal grants to implement the management measures identified in the WMP.

Land Trust – Accreditation The Chattooga Conservancy has operated a land trust since 2006, and currently holds conservation easements on 12 tracts located in northeast Georgia, altogether totaling over 400 acres. The Land Trust Alliance, a national umbrella organization focused on land trust issues, is encouraging eligible land trusts to gain "accredited" status, which requires meeting national quality standards and practices that address the ethical and technical operations of a land trust. Preparing the lengthy accreditation application is a rigorous and exacting process; we submitted our application in April and will be working on the accreditation project throughout the year.

Please also refer to the "Watershed Update" on pp. 10-11 of this publication, which includes more information and commentary about several topics mentioned above. Also, visit our social networking outlets for pictures and other breaking news, and check out the Chattooga Conservancy's new website around mid May at www.chattoogariver.org. And finally, try to make time for experiencing the unparalleled beauty of the Chattooga watershed, that we work so hard to protect. I plan to take in the seasonal display of rhododendrons blooming along the river; this spring's rains promise to bring forth an outstanding show!

The Life of a Caddisfly

Laura Ann Garren

*"The Life of a Caddisfly" is an excerpt from
The Chattooga River: A Natural and Cultural History
by Laura Ann Garren
published in 2013 by The History Press*

Beneath the surface of the river, something wormlike, but segmented, darts through the water and disappears into a crack in a stone. Slowly, a head peers out and two sharp mandibles click together. Sensing that the coast is clear, the creature crawls out onto the surface of the rock. It's about a half-inch long, bright green, and mottled with brown; it looks like a bit of algae, the better to fool predator and prey. Three legs on each side of its upper body sport tiny claws, which enable it to more securely clasp the rock face. What looks like a pair of grappling hooks projects from its posterior end. The creature looks like the star of a science-fiction horror movie, something that would crawl into a person's ear and wreak havoc. But this miniature monster is actually a caddisfly larva, not dangerous to anything but organic matter and perhaps other insect larvae. While not many people may know a caddisfly from a Cadbury crème egg, this insect has a very important role in the life of a river.

The adult caddisfly is a delicate thing, with four lacy, membranous wings and a slender body that can range in color from silver to orange. They also brandish two whip-like antennae, sometimes twice as long as their bodies. Ecologically, they are related to mayflies—described lyrically as "lifelong dancers of a day" by poet Richard Wilbur—and, like mayflies, aren't designed to do much but reproduce. In fact, mayflies don't even have functional mouths: they hatch, emerging from the water by the millions; conduct a magnificent aerial display as they search frantically for mates; copulate, lay eggs, and die, sometimes all on the same day. The adult caddisfly can eat, but because of its "sponging mouth parts," sups lightly on nectar or perhaps a little aphid honeydew, says John Morse, an entomologist at Clemson University. Morse most likely is the world's

leading authority on the caddisfly and manages the *Trichoptera World Checklist*. In 1969 he completed his master's thesis, an inventory of caddisflies in the mountains of South Carolina; he collected at ten sites every night for a year, while attending classes during the day. His findings doubled the number of species identified in the state.

Every known organism is identified using taxonomy, or the scientific system of classification, which was developed by Carl Linnaeus in 1758 to provide consistency for all animals so that scientists would know precisely what species was being referred to when someone said, for instance, "*Rhyacophila*

carolina." This designation translates to "Carolina stream lover" and is a species of caddisfly common to the Chattooga. Each species is organized into the following classifications: kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species. The Carolina stream lover is classified thus: Kingdom Animalia, Phylum Arthropoda, Class Hexapoda, Order Trichoptera, Family Rhyacophilidae, Genus *Rhyacophila*, and species *R. carolina*. Ironically, Linnaeus chose a dead language (Latin, or Latinized Greek) to name living things because it was universal and not likely to evolve, being dead. Caddisflies fall into Tricoptera, the 7th largest order of insects. Approximately 15,000 caddisfly species are known worldwide; the Chattooga River is home to about 150 species, according to Morse. He says up to 1,000 other aquatic insects species also may be found in the Chattooga.



Many species of caddisflies construct and live inside of tubes built of bits of twigs, bark, shells or pebbles, which provide protection and camouflage for the soft-bodied larva.

The importance of a universal classification system is illuminated when you realize how many species of insects exist on Earth: estimates range as high as 80 million, according to Dr. Terry Erwin of the Smithsonian Institute. According to Robert G. Foottit and Peter H. Adler, in their 2009 book, *Insect Biodiversity: Science and Society*, 1,004,898 species of insects exist, representing about two-thirds (58–67%) of all plant and animal species; possibly 10 quintillion (a 10 followed by 17 more zeros) individual insects are alive at a given time.

Like every other organism on Earth, the ultimate purpose of the caddisfly is to reproduce. The beginning, for a caddisfly, is

The Life of a Caddisfly

an egg, which is encased with hundreds of others in “a sticky matrix, a sort of jelly ball,” Morse describes. Laid close to or in water, the eggs hatch in a couple of weeks; the resulting larva enter their new aquatic environment. Here they make a living, foraging around the streambed searching for food, including tiny bits of organic matter resting on the bottom of the stream, as well as algae, fungi, plant material, and other organisms, says Morse, a fit 60-something with glasses and a crew cut. Some even weave “little fishing nets they build in the water and use to catch food.” In addition, the larvae act as a sort of aquatic earthworm, chewing up dead sticks and leaves, breaking them down, and then depositing them via their excrement. As Morse puts it, “They are crucial in the transformation of organic nutrients from tiny particles into larger ones, and of larger ones to smaller ones.” Caddisfly larvae not only eat but also are eaten, by fish, other insects, spiders, crawfish, birds, bats, and other animals in the food chain.

Caddisflies have other interesting habits. Some species of caddisfly larvae move freely in a stream, where they hide in cracks and chase insect prey. However, others creatively “build a little house they carry around, built of bits of sticks, sand, and even the houses of other species of caddisfly larvae” that contain the occupant, which then gets a piggyback ride. “They look like a little Medusa,” Morse chuckles. This ingenious adaptation provides physical protection and camouflage for the soft-bodied larva. In addition, they use these “little tubes” to assist respiration by drawing in a fresh supply of oxygenated water and pushing it out with rhythmic undulations of the body.

Some of these architecturally inclined caddisfly larva fashion their little houses out of mussel shells or pebbles; Morse once saw one that had precisely and symmetrically applied tiny twigs of gradually shortening lengths, on four sides, from top to bottom. The result, a tube of stacked squares, looked like a miniature, art-deco statue. When you see something this elegant and orderly, you may be tempted to suspect that these insects actually think about and plan their designs. However, their behavior is “hardwired by genetics, including a range of

possible adaptations of that behavior according to different environmental conditions,” explains Morse. Basically, they use whatever’s available to them, but sometimes with stunning results that rival any artist’s. In fact, jewelry maker Kathy Kyle considers the designs to be little masterpieces. She collects and raises caddisfly larva, offering them materials not readily available on the bottom of a stream. Using opals, amethysts, turquoise, gold, and other precious gems and minerals, these artisans construct works of art. Kyle then removes each larvae from its tube and returns it to the stream from which it was collected, using the empty vessel to create a one-of-a-kind piece of jewelry.

The most common pollutant Morse has seen on the Chattooga is sediment. Sediments issue from roadwork, road crossings over the river, or “any kind of activity that removes vegetation and causes erosion.”

What sediment does is fill the cracks and crevices, in and among the rocks on the streambed, where insects like to hide to avoid fish. “They have no place to live; the sediment becomes a pollutant that destroys their habitat,” he says.

Left to their devices, the larva grow all year, capturing food to nourish their growing bodies. They pass through five “instars,” a poetic description of the developmental stage, in which they change subtly as they progress toward adulthood. If they avoid becoming someone else’s meal, the larvae finally enter the pupal stage, where they dwell for about two or three weeks. When they emerge as adults, they couldn’t look more different from their aquatic selves: from sci-fi monsters to winged ephemera. After a brief spell upon the earth, they flutter off on their last adventure: to find a mate. After copulating, they alight on the water or dive beneath it, perch on a rock alongside the river or dangle from an overhanging tree branch or bridge abutment. Their last act is to lay eggs, the promise of the next generation. The wheel of life keeps turning.

The caddisfly’s importance to the river cannot be overstated. If for some reason all of them disappeared, the river would die. “It would be a disaster,” says Morse. “The food chain would break down completely. The fish would die. It would stink,” and the same cause would also kill stoneflies, mayflies, and other aquatic species. However, a total caddisfly wipeout would never happen, Morse assures, because “different species are differentially sensitive to pollution and different kinds of pollution.” This realization has led to an elegant method of testing the health of a river using insects, and the unassuming caddisfly is an indicator species, as well as part of the food chain. Morse explains that caddisflies and other insects

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The Chattooga River has an EPT index of 60-65, meaning that 60-65 individual species of “bio-indicators” (mayflies, stoneflies and caddisflies) are found in a water sample. The SC Department of Health & Environmental Control samples 800 sites, representing thousands of miles of streams, and the Chattooga River, heavily forested without much human encroachment, is the cleanest.

are scaled for tolerance from zero to ten, with zero equaling absolute aversion for a pollutant. A community is sampled and the species identified; if the sample contains a lot of species that possess zero tolerance for pollution, then the water is deemed pristine.

According to this criterion, says Morse, the Chattooga River, which has a high density and diversity of caddisflies, is “in pretty good shape, especially near the headwaters.” The most common pollutant Morse has seen on the Chattooga is sediment. Sediments issue from roadwork, road crossings over the river, or “any kind of activity that removes vegetation and causes erosion.” What sediment does is fill the cracks and crevices, in and among the rocks on the streambed, where insects like to hide to avoid fish. “They have no place to live; the sediment becomes a pollutant that destroys their habitat,” he says.

Currently, standard water quality protocols exist in every state, and insects are used for “ambient monitoring”; that is, the testing of a general area as opposed to a specific site, say downstream of a sewage treatment plant. These tests give a good overall indication of water quality. James Glover, Manager of the Aquatic Section of the Bureau of Water at South Carolina’s Department of Health and Environmental Control (SC DHEC), describes the process, known as bio-assessment, and expands on Morse’s explanation: “We use an index called EPT, which stands for the three orders of insects that are very tolerant to pollution.” The orders include mayflies, stoneflies

and caddisflies (with Latin names Ephemeroptera, Plecoptera, and Trichoptera, respectively). These insects offer a 24-hour, daily monitoring system that is more effective than simply sampling water, explains Glover. Insects stay put, while water flows, taking pollutants with it. In other words, insects demonstrate exposure to a pollutant after the effected water has washed downstream. As Morse puts it, “They also respond to the combined effects of all potentially important pollutants in a way that is impossible to measure in a chemical laboratory.”

The Chattooga River has an EPT index of 60-65, says Glover, meaning that 60-65 individual species of “bio-indicators” (mayflies, stoneflies and caddisflies) are found in a water sample. His agency samples 800 sites, representing thousands of miles of streams, and the Chattooga River, heavily forested without much human encroachment, is the cleanest. A direct correlation exists between urbanization and pollution, as you would expect, and the Chattooga is relatively free of either. His agency has one collection site, on Highway 76, which is sampled every other month. The mission of SC DHEC is to carry out the mandate of the Clean Water Act of 1972, which requires the agency to “maintain and restore the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the waters of the nation,” says Glover. The Environmental Protection Agency, created in 1970, holds ultimate authority, but each state partners with this entity, and each other when necessary, to ensure that the laws are enforced. Little do most people know, the humble caddisfly plays an important role in this process. Who would guess that with all the high technology available, an insect is the go-to for water pollution?



Recognizing the masterful design of caddis fly tubes, some jewelry makers have placed the creatures in artificial environments stocked with precious gems and minerals, and used the caddis fly’s innate talents to create one-of-a-kind jewelry pieces.

The Lost Village of Stecoe

Buzz Williams

Ancient human culture, travel patterns and settlement locations were shaped to a large degree by topographic features. Mountain ranges, for example, were natural barriers to travel. It was necessary to cross these barriers at a point of least resistance, usually at a low point called a pass. Consequently, settlements were likely to take hold at a convergence of trails where people congregated beneath a mountain pass. The Khyber Pass comes immediately to mind, where for centuries traders, adventurers and armies crossed the mountains at the Pakistan - Afghanistan border on the trade route between Central and East Asia. Armies often clashed at these natural points of ambush, and diverse cultures developed along the ancient passages, spawned by cultural exchange and exotic trade. Here in the Chattooga River watershed, the Cherokee village of Stecoe (note various spellings: Stecoah, Sticoe, Sticoa, Stecoy, etc.) was located at a place of convergence beneath the only good place to cross what the Cherokee called "The Great Blue Wall," known today as the Blue Ridge Mountains, at a place called "Passover," known today as Mountain City, Georgia, into the Little Tennessee River watershed.

Stecoe Village, as shown on old maps, indicates at least 5 trails intersecting near the center of present day Clayton, Georgia, in an area somewhere on the west side of Stekoa Creek about ½ mile above its confluence with Scott Creek. Maps in the Georgia Archives of surveys conducted for the 3rd Georgia Lottery in 1820 show the old town in District 2, Lot 21, which basically is the present day City of Clayton. At that time, the Surveyor General was given instructions to "...insert in their proper place, what runs of water...[and] noted paths or roads." This is probably our best source for locating the old village of Stecoe.

Natural geological features dictated the convergence of trails at Stecoe Village. One trail was called the Lower Cherokee Trading Path, that crossed the Chattooga River and came up Warwoman Creek to Stecoe Village, and another was called the Hiwassee Trail, which came from the Valley and Over Hill Town settlements and followed down Scott Creek to an intersection with the Lower Cherokee Trading Path in Stecoe Village. A third trail from this intersection led north to the Middle Cherokee Towns located across the Blue Ridge at "Passover."

The Lower Cherokee Trading Path approached Stecoe Village from the east, crossing the Chattooga River and originating in Charleston, South Carolina. This trail ran to Keowee Town, a major trade outpost and site of a frontier fort called Fort Prince George, which was located near Seneca, South Carolina. The trail crossed the Chattooga at Earls Ford, and closely followed Warwoman Road to another old Indian village called "Tuchahreetchih," at a creek we call Tuckaluge Creek. Most scholars agree that from this old village, the trail followed Warwoman Creek to a place called Finny Creek or Martin Creek, just this side of Warwoman Dell. Then the old trail followed Martin Creek to its source at Court House Gap, just north of Pinnacle Mountain. There, the trail divided as it descended toward Stekoa Creek; one trail followed Rattlesnake Creek (today's Norton Creek) to Saddle Gap Creek and then turned downstream to Stekoa Creek, and the other bypassed the village of Stecoe and continued directly to the mountain gap at Passover. The old village was described by early travelers as being across Stekoa Creek from the confluence of Saddle Gap Creek and Stekoa Creek.

The Middle Village Trail that crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains at Passover (Mountain City) originated at the intersection of the Lower Cherokee Trading Path and the Hiwassee Trail, which was known as the "Dividings,"

and then led up today's North Main Street in Clayton, and on to Smith Street, which turns into Stagecoach Road following Coffee Branch, to the gap at Mountain City. This gap was a very unique place. The "Passover" at Mountain City was an unusually low point in the Blue Ridge at 2,044 feet in elevation. At this low point, there was a bowl-like depression on the Eastern Continental Divide. Old manuscripts describe the Passover as a savannah. There, the legendary Herbert's Spring burst from the side of the mountain to the east, to nourish the savannah (see *History of the American Indians*, by James Adair). These waters were said to have been the headwaters for both the Chattooga and the Little Tennessee Rivers, which are on opposite sides of the Eastern Continental Divide. Today, there is a spring in Mountain City called Darling Spring that fits the description of the favorite watering hole used by early traders called Herbert's Spring. An interesting note is that some historians believe this spring was named for a British Indian Agent who visited the area in the early 1700s. Today, the bottom lands below Herbert's Spring have all been drained for agricultural and development activities.



Figure 1: A map of the Cherokee country, by John Stuart, 1764; "Stecoy Old Town" is shown just to the left of center.

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Another main trail entered Old Stecoe from the south along Old Highway 441, also known as South Main Street in Clayton. Traveling south from Clayton, this old trail crossed Scott Creek and continued for about 1.5 miles further, where the trail forked. The right fork went to Tiger Mountain, and probably out Bridge Creek Road and eventually to Nacoochee Village near present day Helen, Georgia. The other fork continued south past Tiger, following the west side of the old Tallulah Falls Railroad, then south over "high hills" west of Lakemont, Georgia, to Cranes Old Ford on the Tallulah River at Lake Rabun. Once across the Tallulah River, the trail forked again. The left fork went southeast, across the Tugalo River below the confluence of the Chattooga River and the Tallulah River, and into South Carolina. This trail was an alternate route to the Cherokee trading path to Charleston. The right fork of the trail ran south to Toccoa, Georgia, where it eventually tied into the old Unicoi Turnpike, that was a main route from the Tugaloo Old Town, once a thriving Cherokee trade center, to the Valley and Over Hill towns. Later, the trail from Toccoa through Clayton and into North Carolina would be called the Locust Stake Road, and eventually became Georgia State Highway 441.

The Native American trail system leading into the "Dividings" was much like a spider web spreading across the landscape. There were many secondary trails and connector trails. For example, The Hiwassee Trail also forked on the other side of the gap above the headwaters of Scott Creek. The left fork followed down Timpson Creek, going to the southwest and leading to Nacoochee Village. The right fork went up Timpson Creek for about a mile, and then turned northwest across a gap to a tributary of Persimmon Creek called Racepath Creek. Here at the confluence of these two creeks, the trail crossed the Tallulah River to the Plum Orchard community, went across the Blue Ridge at Tom Coward Gap, and then on to the Valley Towns on the Hiwassee River.

There was also a connector trail that came from South Carolina across the Chattooga River at Rogue's Ford, where Highway 76 crosses the Chattooga River today. The trail closely followed present day Highway 76 to another old village called "Chicherohe," and went then through a gap near Rainy Mountain to connect with the Cherokee Trading Path on Warwoman Creek (Henry Mouzon's Map, 1777).

Another connector trail between the Middle Village Trail and the Hiwassee Trail departed the Middle Village Trail at present Dillard, Georgia, near another old village called Estatoe, and traveled through Keener Gap to connect with the Hiwassee

Trail. This trail bypassed the Dividings as sort of a short cut.

Old maps and manuscripts differ on the exact location of the Stecoe Village, but by piecing together the more credible descriptions one could easily conclude that it was located inside the present City of Clayton. Probably the best map was one drawn by Captain John Stuart, a British Indian Agent, who drew a map of his escape route after surviving the Fort Loudoun massacre during the Cherokee War in 1760 (see figure 1). Stuart knew the country well, since he had lived among the Cherokee for many years. Stuart drew the map in 1764, long after "Sticoy Old Town" had been abandoned. On this map, Stuart named a creek on the trail leading to Stecoe Village "Tuckaritche Creek." Close examination of this map reveals that this stream is called Warwoman Creek today.

A useful map in helping solve the mystery of Stecoe Village is a map drawn by a cartographer who accompanied the Grant Expedition against the Cherokee in 1761 (see figure 2.) On June 9, 1761, Christopher French, a soldier who accompanied the Grant Expedition, recorded the following passage in his journal



Figure 2: A cartographer's map of the 1761 Grant Expedition notes "Sticoe Old Town," which is located on the left side of the image.

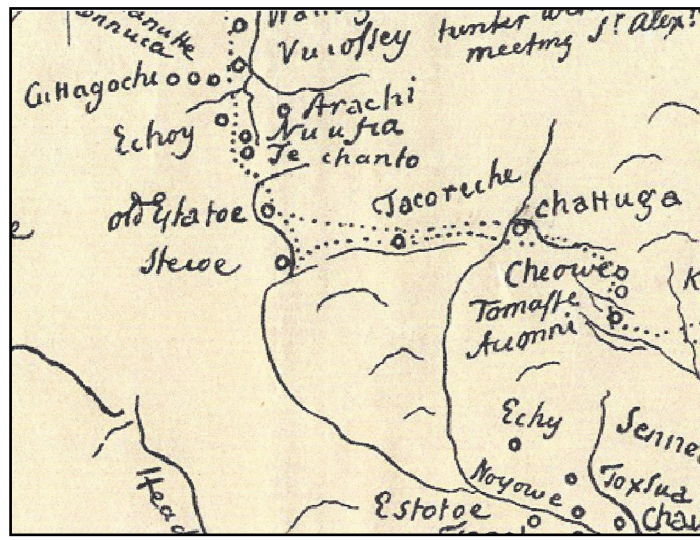
on the morning that Grant's army prepared to break camp at "Tuckahreetchih Old Town" on Warwoman Creek:

"Marched about six. When we got a short way from camp one of the Guides came back & acquainted Col. Grant that some Indians had been

seen who had left their Provisions behind them & ran away, & that we might expect to be attack'd. We march'd on (all in great Spirits) & soon reach'd the Potatoe Mountains which are extremely high on both sides, & the Road narrow, which would make it of great advantage to an Enemy. These are about 4 miles through, but not so bad in all parts. At about 10 Miles distance is Stickou Old Town, which was destroy'd as the other. Here is a very pretty Plain. On a tree about the middle of it (& which the Indians had not been long gone from) we saw the following mark. Here the road turns off to the Middle settlements. This was interpreted to be either a threatening, or an Indication that they had a soldier of the 17th Regt. Prisoner, whom we miss'd some Days ago, & had suppos'd to be drown'd." [See figure 3]

The Potato Mountains on the Grant Expedition map are undoubtedly the Blue Ridge Mountains. At a point on the trail where Warwoman Creek and Finny Creek converge, the terrain becomes steep and restricted. From here, there were two possibilities to cross the ridge into the Stekoa Creek watershed. One would have been to climb the steep narrow cove called

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George Hunter's map of the Cherokee country dates to 1730 and shows Stecoe Village near the center of this image.

Warwoman Dell through Saddle Gap into where Clayton stands today. This route, although shorter, traverses through a narrow cove with steep side slopes. The other route took the longer trail that ran through Court House Gap, north of Pinnacle Knob, and into the Stekoa Creek watershed. Keeping in mind that the Grant Expedition consisted of 2,600 men and hundreds of horses and wagons, many historians believe that both William Bartram and the three armies that passed through the area in the late 1700s took this route up Martin Creek to Court House Gap.

William Bartram, who came this same way in 1775, gave us a memorable description of Stecoe Village at the "Dividings":

"The swelling bases of the surrounding hills fronting the meadows presented for my acceptance the fragrant red strawberry, in painted beds of many acres surface, indeed I may safely say, many hundreds.

"After passing through this meadow, the road led me over the bases of a ridge of hills, which as a bold promontory dividing the fields I had just passed, form expansive green lawns. On these towering hills appeared the ruins of the ancient famous town of Sticoe. Here was a vast Indian mount or tumulus and great terrace, on which stood the council house, with banks encompassing their circus; here were also Peach and Plumb orchards; some of the trees appeared yet thriving and fruitful. Presently after leaving these ruins, the vale and fields are divided by means of a spur of the mountains pushing forward: here likewise the road forked; the left-hand path continued up the mountains to the Over hill towns: I followed the vale to the right hand, and soon began to ascend the hills, riding several miles over very rough, stony land, yielding the like vegetable productions as heretofore; and descending again gradually, by a dubious winding path, leading into a narrow vale and

lawn, through which rolled on before me a delightful brook, waters of the Tanase." (William Bartram's *Travels*.)

Note that Bartram refers to Stecoe Village as the "famous town of Sticoe" and the "vast Indian mount" he describes as being on "towering hills." Bartram was known for his over-the-top descriptions of places of interest. Yet there are long segments of his journey where he gives little attention to detail. However, Bartram was an accomplished botanist, and there is little doubt of his accuracy when he describes peach and plum orchards as "thriving and fruitful."

On November 19, 1796, Indian Agent Benjamin Hawkins was traveling to the Creek Nation and passed through the Chattooga River watershed to Stecoe Village. Hawkins gave the following description of the landscape, after breaking camp on Warwoman Creek and heading west along the Cherokee Trading Path:

"My pilot arrived, and I [set] out at 9 o'clock and continued up the creek to its source, crossing it in all nine times. This creek is called Falling Creek by Bartram. I met two Indian women on horseback, driving ten very fat cattle to the station for a market. I crossed a ridge which divides the waters of this creek from Sticcoa, and went down then to the main creek at the dividings, so called for the division of the path here. I take the left, the course W. This path is 8 miles from camp. There is on the creek in this neighborhood fine cane in abundance, and here I saw encamped the remainder of the packhorsemen, with 60 or seventy horses. There passed me this day from Etowwah, 10 horses loaded with skins, this makes 31 wagon loads that have been brought down this path this season. I traveled down this creek one mile and crossed a creek 8 feet wide running to the left; in the forks of these creeks stood foremost the town of Sticcoa, both creeks abound with cane." (Letters of Benjamin Hawkins, 1796-1806.)

The description given by Hawkins suggests that he came through Courthouse Gap at the head of Martin Creek (Bartram's Falling Creek) and down to Stekoa Creek just north of Clayton.

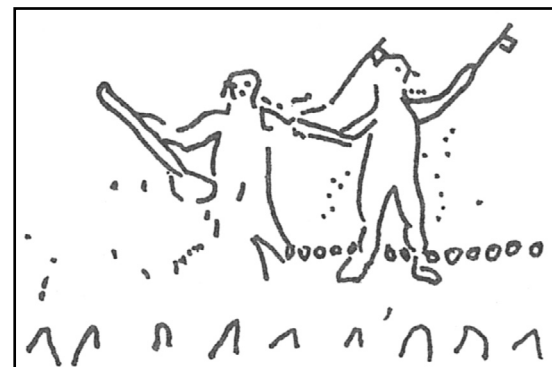


Figure 3: This sketch appeared in the *Journal of an Expedition to South Carolina (1761)* by Christopher French, who decribed it as an Indian "mark" either threatening or indicating they had a prisoner.

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Traveling downstream, Hawkins would have reached the Dividings near the center of Clayton. Hawkins, who was headed to the Creek nation, took the west fork across Scott Creek, passing through the old village of Stecoe.

Even though we may not know exactly where the old village stood, we can only imagine how important it was in the lives of Native Americans. There was undoubtedly much interaction of a very diverse mix of travelers at Stecoe Village, including peoples from different Indian villages and tribes, Mobilian traders who brought shells, chert, seeds and copper, and even lone Scotts-Irish traders, who were the first white men to migrate into Indian country. These white traders would be harbingers of things to come: smallpox, war and famine. This place, that must have been so stimulated by cultural and economic exchange, would soon pay the price for living near a geological crossroads. The village was probably devastated by small pox in one of the first epidemics to sweep through the Cherokee nation in the early 1700s. Later, three large British and American armies would march through the old abandoned village. Stecoe Village was also located on the border between Cherokee and Creek Indian territories. The Creeks probably took advantage of Cherokee people, whose populations were greatly reduced by the small pox epidemics. The coupe de gras for Sticoe Village could have been the constant raids by the Creeks during this period. By the time the three European armies of Montgomery, Grant and Williamson passed through on their way to destroy what was left of the Cherokee people, Sticoe Village had long been abandoned.

There is no trace of the old village today. The Georgia Gold Rush of the early 1800s resulted in the Cherokee Removal and the "Trail of Tears." The land of the north Georgia mountains was surveyed and offered to settlers in the Georgia Lottery. The old village was soon plowed under. Then, as the City of Clayton became established, the building of the Tallulah Falls Railroad and Highway 441 obliterated what was left of the old Indian village.

Correspondence with archaeologists at the Georgia Department of Transportation, the agency that constructed Highway 441 in the early 1960s, yielded no record of the village. University of Georgia archaeologists expressed little interest in investigating the site of the old village, given the heavy development in the area that has likely destroyed all hope of recovering useful scientific information. During conversation with one long-time resident, he said that as a young boy, he remembers a large hill on East Savannah Street that was leveled to make way for a

new city street. This place is very close to the Dividings, as identified on old maps and in written descriptions. He actually knew the man who leveled the hill. When I asked him if the man had discovered any artifacts during the earth-moving activity, his reply was "No, but he probably wouldn't have cared; he was not interested in those things."

Today Clayton, where Stecoe Village once stood, is working to shape its identity. Highway and development sprawl have obliterated many of the beautiful valleys and meadows so often described by the early travelers that came through the unspoiled country during the 1700s. Unemployment is a concern, and jobs are limited. Groups seeking to market Clayton diverge on how to boost the local economy. One prevalent strategy to create new jobs is centered on tapping into the tourist trade passing through town on Highway 441; another group wants more industry. Nonetheless, one thing is clear: as in the old days, most of the traffic on Highway 441 through Clayton consists of people on their way to somewhere else. Stecoe Village was destroyed as a result of its geographic location. If history repeats itself, the future of the City of Clayton will ultimately depend on how the community adapts to Clayton's strategic location at the convergence of multiple human migratory corridors that often bring destruction as well as economic growth.

Yet, much of the surrounding area has been protected as national forest land. The Chattooga National Wild and Scenic River is one of the longest free-flowing rivers in the eastern United States. Black Rock State Park

is one of the most beautiful parks in Georgia. Rabun County is one of the most biologically rich places on Earth. The answer to revitalizing Clayton may be to develop quality destination sites in keeping with our rich cultural and natural heritage, rather than becoming a way-station on the path to somewhere else.

The Chattooga Conservancy is currently collaborating with the City of Clayton in building a park on Stekoa Creek, and we have restored a beautiful section of Stekoa Creek next to Highway 441. The Stekoa Creek Park is landscaped with native plants, many of which were described by William Bartram in 1775. The park features a timber frame pavilion, walking trails along a greenway beside the creek, and interpretive stations relevant to our rich cultural and natural heritage. There is a good possibility that the community will continue working to establish a greenway through Clayton, that could be connected to the Bartram Trail, Black Rock State Park, the Chattooga River Trail system, and conceivably even to the Appalachian Trail. We hope people will join this effort to make Clayton a place to come to, not just through.

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Watershed Update

Forest Service Proposes Massive Project in the Warwoman Watershed

The Chattooga River Ranger District based in the Georgia portion of the Chattooga watershed recently released a lengthy draft environmental assessment (draft EA) for the Forest Service's Upper Warwoman Project, which proposes "treatments" on about 11,424 acres of our national forest land in the Warwoman Creek watershed. The draft EA documents that implementing the project would result in a hefty net loss to taxpayers of **negative \$1,358,170**. Details of the proposal include: 1,180 acres of timber harvesting; 10,121 acres of burning (5,406 acres of which would occur *during the growing season*); construction of 5 stream crossings; 11 miles of road building; road building into a portion of the Windy Gap Roadless Area (a roadless area that was illegally excluded from protection during the last Chattahoochee Forest Plan revision); and, the Warwoman project would occur where over 75% of the project area is located on steep and/or very steep slopes.

The Chattooga Conservancy submitted comments on the draft EA, that were critical of the scope and intensity of the agency's proposal. In sum, our comments urged the Forest Service to protect the Windy Gap Roadless Area; restore connected patches of native old growth trees across the landscape; incorporate the use of benign neglect as an option to heavy-handed management (i.e., the stated plans for large scale burning, timber harvesting and road reconstruction of the Tuckaluge Spur Road, which would disqualify about 2,000 acres of the Windy Gap Roadless Area); and, protect water quality by decommissioning the Milksick Cove and Windy Gap Roads, continued use of which are clearly at odds with protecting Tuckaluge Creek from increased erosion and sedimentation, and that detract from backcountry objectives of higher value along the Bartram Trail. Stay tuned.

Battle Over the Upper Chattooga Continues

Last August, the Andrew Pickens Ranger District of the Forest Service released an environmental assessment (EA) that proposed to designate 6 new "boater access" trails throughout the Chattooga River's upper reaches. Because we believe that this proposal contains several legal and analytical infractions, we submitted comments in opposition of the proposal and will continue to advocate for more reasoned and informed decision-making on the behalf of the Forest Service. Specifically, the Forest Service's proposal is based upon an analysis prepared back in 2012, that addresses the potential environmental impacts from the designation of new 5 boater access trails in the headwaters. Yet in the most recent proposal, 6 boater access

trails have been proposed, meaning that the sixth trail has not been analyzed for its impacts. Additionally, we believe that several environmental statutes including the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Wilderness Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, have been violated due to serious flaws in the Forest Service's analyses. Our greatest concern is that if the new trails are designated as proposed, the sense of rugged isolation and solitude that has defined the Chattooga's headwaters will be lost and thus irreparable damage to the Chattooga River's outstandingly remarkable values will occur. We will continue to work for designating boater access trails in a manner that is procedurally and analytically sound. With public support, there is a good chance of achieving these goals.

Surprisingly, the Terrapin Mountain and Overflow Creek areas, both located within the Chattooga's headwaters, were not inventoried and evaluated as suitable for potential wilderness designation, and as such, remain subject to the possibility of being included within the suitable timber base.

NC Forest Plan Revision is Underway

The Chattooga Conservancy has recently expanded our monitoring and oversight of Forest Service activities to include the extensive revision of the Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest (NPNF) Land and Resource Management Plan. The outcome of the plan revision will govern the management of this national forest for the next 10 years, and indications are that the Forest Service is gearing up to propose an increase in the total acreage that is deemed suitable for timber

harvesting (known as the "suitable timber base"). Because the Chattooga's headwaters are in the Nantahala National Forest in NC, we are concerned with the possibility of increased commercial logging, and the resulting habitat fragmentation, road construction, and erosion and sedimentation that could occur from new land disturbing activities within the Chattooga headwaters.

As part of the ongoing forest plan revision process, the Forest Service is required to inventory and evaluate all lands within the NPNF that could be suitable for wilderness designation. Surprisingly, the Terrapin Mountain and Overflow Creek areas, both located within the Chattooga's headwaters, were not so inventoried or evaluated and, as such, remain subject to the possibility of being included within the suitable timber base. In light of the wilderness characteristics that are abundant throughout each of these areas, we believe that their exclusion was erroneous and unlawful, and have drafted our comments in support of this contention.

The public can expect a draft environmental impact statement of the new NPNF plan in early 2016, which will be subject to a 90-day comment period followed by the Forest Service's response, then an "objection process," and then disclosure of the agency's preferred alternative for the new Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Plan.

Watershed Update

Stekoa Creek Park - Opening This Spring

Plans are to officially open Stekoa Creek Park this spring! The 5-acre park is located on Highway 441 North in Clayton, GA, and includes a beautiful section of Stekoa Creek. The park project has been a huge endeavor for the Chattooga Conservancy, that has required over 4 years of sustained fundraising efforts and thousands of hours of work to restore the ecological values of the property while constructing amenities for public use. Now in a near-finished state, Stekoa Creek Park features a timber frame pavilion, with its foundation and fireplace built from hand-cut Georgia granite; a disability access ramp; restrooms; an informational kiosk; a foot bridge over Stekoa Creek; hiking trails, with resting benches and interpretive signs; a rain garden; hundreds of native plants and a multitude of educational botanical markers that were installed during the restoration work; a raised-bed wildflower garden; a timber frame trellis with native flowering vines; and, a kid's play station. Also part of the restoration work is a 75-foot section of Stekoa Creek that had severely eroding streambank, which was restored using bioengineering techniques.

By design the Stekoa Creek Park project will boost efforts to raise awareness about the importance of restoring and protecting Stekoa Creek, which is a major polluted tributary to the Chattooga River. The park will also contribute to public health by encouraging recreation, providing a place to learn about landscaping with native plants, and demonstrating ways to improve water quality in Stekoa Creek. If anyone would like to be a part of this important, ongoing community effort with either donations of time or funding, please contact the Chattooga Conservancy. The date of the opening ceremony will be announced soon.

Land Trust "Accreditation" Application Commentary Sought

The Land Trust Alliance's accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands in perpetuity. The Chattooga Conservancy, which also operates a land trust, is pleased to announce it is applying for accreditation. The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive

review of each applicant's policies and programs. We believe that accreditation will open many doors and opportunities for our land trust operation. The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how the Chattooga Conservancy complies with national quality standards and practices, which address the ethical and technical operations of a land trust. For the full list of standards, see www.landtrustaccreditation.org/tips-and-tools/indicator-practices. To learn more about the accreditation program and to submit a comment, visit www.landtrustaccreditation.org, or email your comment to info@landtrustaccreditation.org. Comments may also be faxed or mailed to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, Attn: Public Comments: (fax) 518-587-3183; (mail) 36

Phila Street, Suite 2, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. Comments on the Chattooga Conservancy's application will be most useful if received before June 1, 2015.

Two More Cell Tower Victories

After halting construction of an unsightly cell tower on Wolf Mountain adjacent to the Chattooga Wild & Scenic River Corridor, the Chattooga Conservancy was involved in **defeating two more visually intrusive cell tower projects in the Chattooga River watershed** during 2014. The first victory was the result of another application by SCI Towers to obtain a permit for constructing a 195-foot cell tower near the Thrifts Ferry Road in SC, in close proximity to the Chattooga Wild & Scenic River Corridor. With support from private property owners near the proposed

site, we challenged the application such that SCI withdrew it from consideration by the Oconee County Board of Zoning Appeals. The next victory involved an application by Verizon to build a 120-foot cell tower in Whiteside Cove at the base of the Whiteside Mountain, located at the top of the Chattooga River watershed in Jackson County, NC. In this instance, the Chattooga Conservancy worked with affected landowners to contest Verizon's application, because the presence of a cell tower at Whiteside Mountain would have an unacceptable negative effect on the natural and cultural heritage of Whiteside Cove and the unique view of the Chattooga River watershed as seen from on top of Whiteside Mountain, a heavily used destination site and one of the most iconic mountains in the Southern Appalachians. In response to this opposition, Verizon withdrew their application - for the time being, at least....



Yona Welch of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians offered a ceremonial blessing of Stekoa Creek Park during a celebration there in June 2014.

photo by Megan Studdard, The Clayton Tribune

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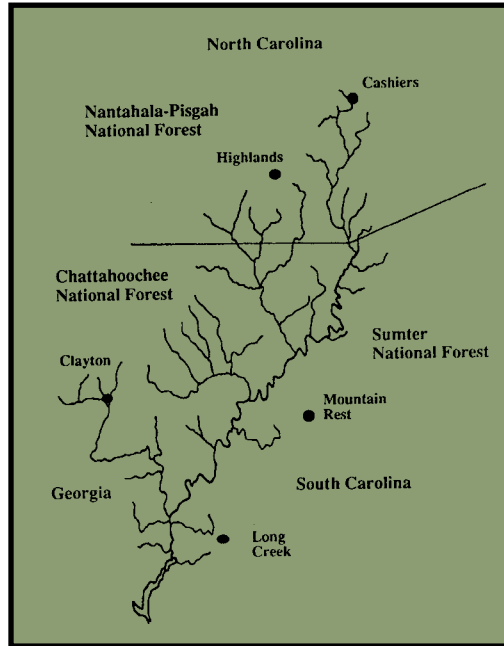
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Goals:

Monitor the U.S. Forest Service's management of public forest lands in the watershed, and work cooperatively to develop a sound ecosystem initiative for the watershed

Promote public choice based on credible scientific information

Protect remaining old growth and roadless areas

Promote public land acquisition by the Forest Service in the watershed

Educate the public

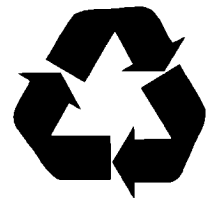
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