The Pen Drawing of the rolling peaks of the Plot Balsam Range was sketched by Artist Douglas Grant from a point on the Cabin Flats Road, about a mile south of the Balsam railway station. In the right foreground is the Balsam Hotel. The twin peaks in the center background are Ame's Plot Balsam (left) and Brother Plot (right). A study of the leopard-spotted Plot Hounds (Canis aureus Plotani) is in the inset.
By H. C. Wilburn

To start at the beginning of the name, Plott, in America in the realm of place-names, dogdom, and human population, maybe we should go back about two hundred years to the time when Johannes Plott, along with other emigrants from southwest Germany, embarked at Rotterdam, Hollands' bound for Philadelphia, where they landed September 12, 1750. Legend has it that the forbears of Johannes Plott had been gamekeepers for Saxon princes, and that he brought with him to America several boar and staghounds from a kennel that had been developed in Europe. From Philadelphia, Johannes Plott made his way to New Bern, N. C., and later to Cabarrus County where he married and reared a family, including Henry, who was born October 10, 1770. Shortly after the year 1803, after his marriage to Lydia Osborne, Henry Plott settled on Pigeon River, a few miles above what is now Canton, and later on Dick's Creek, now known as Plott Creek, and in the shadow of towering mountains to the west that later became known as the Plott Balsam. In the year 1810, he purchased two one-hundred acre tracts in this area, and increased his holdings, by 1825, to nearly 2,000 acres. Out of his purchases in 1815 at Balsam Gap, was from his neighbor, and no doubt, his fellow hunter, David Westner, who froze to death while on a hunt or the peak that still bears his name.

To say that this entire area was a “hunter's paradise” is much too mild a statement. It was a great deal more: bear, deer, turkey, and other smaller game, provided food, clothing and by the sale of excess meat and pelt. Brought in a small but much needed supply of cash. It is historically significant, and pertinent to this account that just about one hundred years previously, a party of Long-hunters had camped in this upper region of Richland Creek and left their “mark” and the date, “1760” carved on a beech tree. This hunting party’s visit was over fifty years earlier than the much heralded “D. H. 44, a Bar of garlic, this tree in the year 1760,” near Jonesboro, Tenn.

All this is to emphasize the importance of dogs and hunting in the economy of Plott Creek & vicinity. This mountainous ground was game-filled frontier. Everybody and his brother, and perhaps, some of the sisters too, were hunters. Before leaving Cabarrus County, Plott had developed and trained a pack of twenty, or more, bear hunting dogs. Needless to say that when he settled in Haywood County his trained pack was his principal stock-in-trade.

Enos Plott, 4th son of Henry Plott who was born in 1803, near Waynesville, acquired between 1823 and 1855, nine tracts, seven of which were located on upper Richland Creek, the other two being on Jonathan Creek. James Plott, the 5th son of Henry Plott, between 1832 and 1865 acquired thirteen tracts, all located on the waters of upper Jonathan Creek.

These hardy pioneers and their descendants inherited from their forebears a love for the chase, and like them devoted time and interest to the breeding and training of hounds suitable and necessary for successful hunting. In order to improve his own breed, Mont Plott, grandson of Henry Plott, crossed them with heavy duty hounds in north Georgia which had been imported by German settlers in that area.

Among other notable offerings resulting from this cross-breeding was “Old Thunderer," known in song and story by reason of his deep-mouthed “thundering after Old Bruin" in the high and rugged Balsams and other adjoining regions. In addition to his notable trailing and killing qualities, "Old Thunderer" bore the leopard-spotted color markings which became characteristic of the best in Plott hounds. This is illustrated in the middle figure, Gamble Plott's, one of the artists’ Douglas Grant’s pen drawing, inset in the panorama of the Plott Balsam range.

At the time of Professor Arnold Guyot’s explorations, measuring and naming of the mountains in the Southern Appalachians, in the 1850s, Enos and Amos Plott were living at their homes, the former on Plott Creek, the latter on Campbell Creek, one of the main tributaries of Jonathan Creek, where they had settled some twenty-five or thirty years previously. No doubt the notable scientist from Princeton College, now Princeton University, was regaled with current bear-hunting and other stories by his guides and helpers while they sat around camp fires on the mountain tops, the professor interminably reading and recording figures from his battery of instruments. Such local characters as W. Medford, Bill Reinhart, Aaron and William Brown, and some others, were employed by Guyot to help him in the Herculean task of getting with his equipment to the remote and hard-to-reach places where he designed to make observations.

In his notes Guyot stated that for the benefit of geography, it was necessary to fix delirious names to each point whose elevation he determined; and he commented at some length on the fact that, up to his time, very few names of individual peaks in Southern Appalachians had been established; only general names such as Smoky Mountains, Big Mountains, Balsam Mountains, etc., had been applied to ranges or districts. Then too, he realized the difficulty and thankless nature of proceeding with the matter of naming places: but he stated that the principal of procedure was: (1) Indian names; (2) descriptive names; (3) names of men of no regretting the fact that so many Indian names had been retain by the whites.

With this principal to guide him and with local information at hand, he proceeded to give the name "Junaluska Balsam," as an alternate name for the peak now generally known as Jones Knob. This, in honor of Chief Junaluska, who died, probably in the same year.
At the time of Professor Arnold Guyot's explorations, measuring and naming of the mountains in the Southern Appalachians, in the 1850s, Enos and Amos Plott were living at their homes, the former on Plott Creek, the latter on Campbell Creek, one of the main tributaries of Jonathan Creek, where they had settled some twenty-five or thirty years previously. No doubt the notable scientist from Princeton University, now Princeton University, was regaled with current bear-hunting and other stories by his guides and helpers while they sat around camp fires on the mountain tops, the professor intermittently reading and recording figures from his battery of instruments. Such local characters as Wid Medford, Bill Reinhart, Aaron and William Brown, and some others, were employed by Guyot to help him in the Herculean task of getting with his equipment to the remote and hard-to-reach places where he designed to make observations.

In his notes Guyot stated that making his own work valuable, it was necessary to fix definite names to each point whose elevation he determined; and he commented at some length on the fact that, up to his time, very few names of individual peaks in the Southern Appalachians had been established: only general names, such as Smoky Mountains, Black Mountains, Balsam Mountains, etc., had been applied to ranges or districts. Then too, he realized the difficulty and thankless nature of proceeding with the matter of placing names; but he stated that his principal of procedure was: (1) Indian names; (2) descriptive names; (3) names of men of note, regretting the fact that so few Indian names had been retained by the whites.

With this principal to guide him, and with local information at hand, he proceeded to give the name, "Junaluska Balsam," as an alternate for the peak now generally known as Jones Knob. This was in honor of Chief Junaluska who died, probably in the same year in which Guyot was in Haywood and Jackson Counties.

The name, "Jones" as applied to that peak with the alternate designation, "Junaluska Balsam," owes its origin to the following account given to me by the Rev. Aaron C. Bryson at his home on Woodfin Creek which rises high up on the south slope of Jones Knob. The Rev. Bryson stated that he had heard the account from his father, Sam H. Bryson, and his grandfather, Robert L. Bryson who was one of the first settlers on Woodfin Creek shortly after the formation of Haywood County in 1808. "In the period when public interest was aroused by reason of the controversy between Dr. Elisha Mitchell and Thomas L. Clinegan as to which peak in the Southern Appalachians was the highest, a man names Jones, an 'Outlander', came into the Woodfin Creek area and stayed in the home of Robert L. Bryson, my grandfather. Jones represented that he was, 'Somebody', seeking to find the highest mountain. After getting instructions he started on the climb to the top of the mountain in question. He was gone the greater part of a day, and reported to my grandfather, and others present, that he had been to the very top of the peak, and found that it was absolutely the highest in the entire region. After considerable questioning as to where he had been and what he saw, grandfather was convinced that Jones had not been near the top, nor even up into the evergreen timber that reaches some distance down the slope. He looked at Jones and called him a fool and a fake. Following this incident, in derision, the Brysons, and others in the vicinity, referred to the mountain as "Jones' Folly", and the name so remained for a good many years." It so appeared on some of the early local maps. In later times people who did not know about "Jones' Folly", adopted the name Jones' Knob or Jones' Peak. Research and inquiry failed to reveal the identity of Mr. Jones.

(The second article in this series will appear next Sunday.)