

Plott Range Was Named For Early Settlers

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By H. C. Wilburn

To start at the beginning of the name, Plott, in America, is 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, Holland bound for Philadelphia, where they landed September 12, 1760. Legend has it that the forebears of Johannes Plott had been gamekeepers for Saxony princes, and that he brought with him to America several boar and stag-hounds from a kennel that had been developed in Europe.

From Philadelphia, Johannes Plott made his way by boat 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 1800, after his marriage to Lydia Osborne, Henry Plott settled on Piogon 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 Balsams. 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. One 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 on 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 and clothing and by the sale of extra meat and pelts, 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, "1708," carved on a beech tree. This hunting party's visit was over fifty years earlier than the much heralded "D. Boon Called a Bar on Jonesboro, Tenn."

All this is to emphasize the importance of dogs and hunting in the economy of the pioneers to this area. In the year 1760, near Jonesboro, Tenn.

Enos Plott, 4th son of Henry Plott, who was born in 1802, near Waynesville, acquired between 1825 and 1865, nine tracts, seven of which were located on upper Richland Creek; the other two being on Jonathan Creek.

Amos Plott, the 5th son of Henry Plott, between 1832 and 1865 acquired thirteen tracts, all located



THIS PEN DRAWING of the rolling peaks of the Plott 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 Amos Plott Balsam (left) and Brother Plott (right). A study of the leopard-spotted Plott Hounds (Canidae Plottiana) is in the inset.



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 energy to the breeding and training of hounds suitable and necessary for successful hunting. In order to improve his own breed, Plott, grandson of Henry Plott, cross-bred them, with heavy duty hounds in north Georgia which had been imported by German settlers in that area.

Among other notable offspring resulting from that cross-breeding, was "Old Thunderer", known by reason of his song and story by reason of his deep-mouthed "thundering after Old Bruin" in the high and rugged Balsams and other adjacent regions. In addition to his notable traits 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. Canidae Plottiana, of artist Douglas Grant's pen-drawings. In his notes Guyot stated that died, probably in the same year in

for the benefit of geography, and which Guyot was in Haywood and 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 laughed at Jones and called him a fool and a fake. Following this incident, in decision, 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 a man named Jones, an

highest, a man named Jones, an "Outlander", came into the Woodfin "Jones' folly", adopted the name of Robert L. Bryson, my Grandfather, 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).

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From Philadelphia, Johannes Plott made his way by boat 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 1800, 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 Balsams. 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. One 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 on 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 extra meat and pelts, 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, "1706," carved on a beech tree. This hunting party's visit was over fifty years earlier than the much heralded "D. Boon Cilled a Bar on This tree in the year 1760," near Jonesboro, Tenn.

All this is to emphasize the importance of dogs and hunting in the economy of the pioneers to this mountainous, timber-covered, game-filled frontier. Everybody and his brother, and perhaps, some of the sisters too, were hunters. Before leaving Cabarrus County Henry 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.

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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 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.

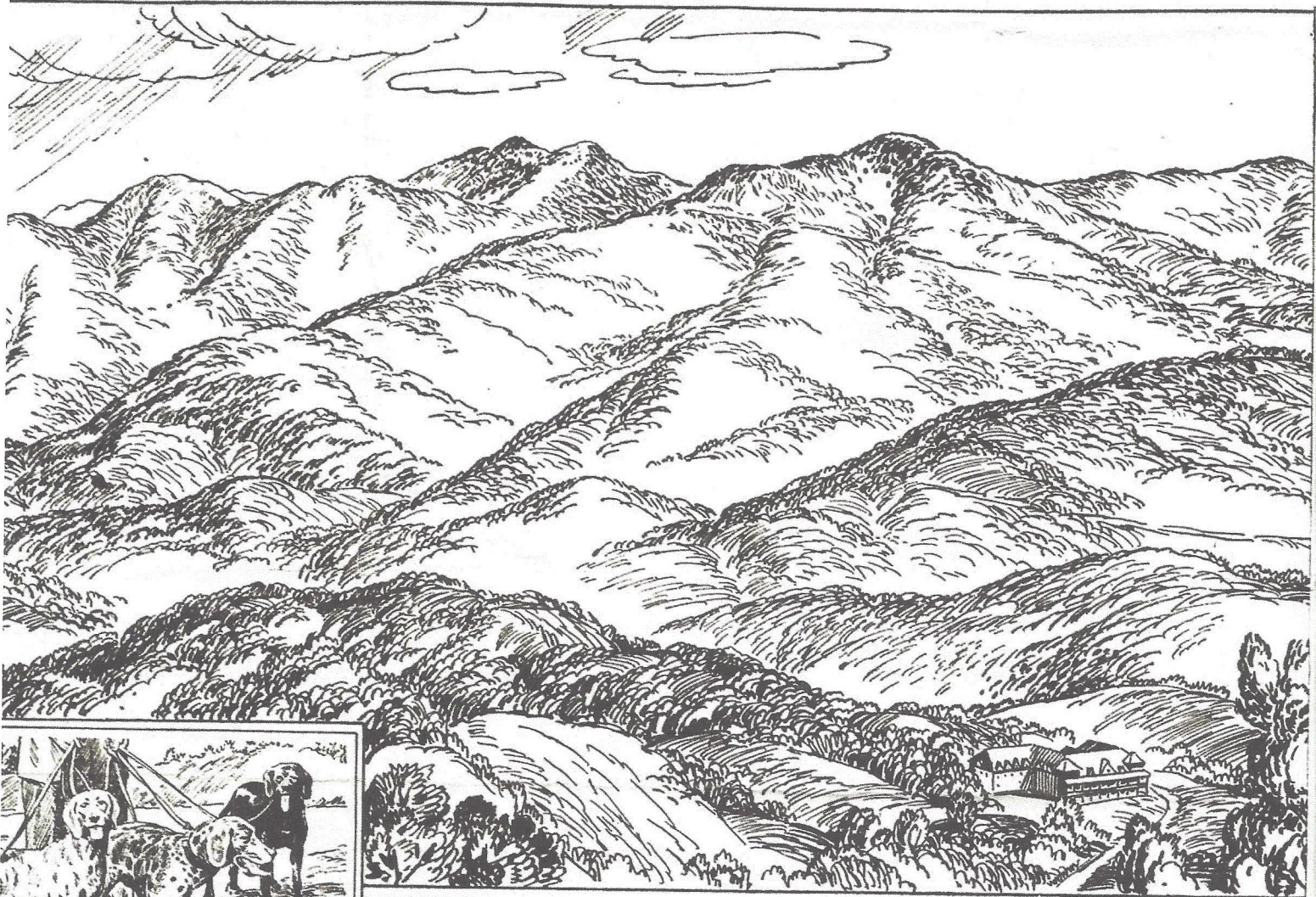
In his notes Guyot stated that

for the benefit of geography, to make 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, Blue 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 the principal of procedure was: (1) descriptive names; (2) names of men of no 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



THIS PEN DRAWING sketched by Artist Douglas Grant south of the Balsam Mountains, showing twin peaks in the center (right). A study of the mountain range is shown in the inset.



THIS PEN DRAWING of the rolling peaks of the Plott 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 Amos Plott Balsam (left) and Brother Plott (right). A study of the leopard-spotted Plott Hounds (*Canidae Plottiana*) is in the inset.

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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. Clingman as to which peak in the Southern Appalachians was the highest, a man named 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 laughed 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).