

**Audio Tour of the Uwharrie Trail**  
**Final Script – May 16 2014**

1. **Tot Hill Trailhead: *The Lost Trail*.**  
**GPS Location: -79.904635, 35.636377**

Among the vast forest, which cloaks the ridges and valleys of the ancient Uwharrie Mountains in central North Carolina, lies the quivering Uwharrie Trail. The trail perforates The Uwharrie National Forest, one of the smallest, youngest and most fragmented of our national forests. The Uwharrie National Forest was originally bought in the 1930s during the Great Depression and was designated as part of the National Forest System by John F. Kennedy in 1961.

Joe Moffitt, the son of a local trapper, was the original trailblazer of the Uwharrie Trail. Forty years ago Joe envisioned a path through the Uwharries that would be a source for kids to learn about the woods. Although the property exchanged between public and private land, Joe was able to begin building the trail through his community connections. Under his leadership, local Boy Scout troops and volunteers blazed the Uwharrie Trail until it was 53 miles long.

Many sections of the original trail that were closed as private properties were sold or left to heirs who moved. But in recent years, conservation partners including The Land Trust for Central North Carolina, the U.S. Forest Service, the N.C. Zoo, and the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission have helped restore many of these lost sections. Thanks to more than 15 years of conservation work, the Uwharrie Trail is now closer than ever to being reconnected and can now be hiked in its 40-mile entirety.

What follows are the tales of those who came before you. As you hike along the Uwharrie Trail, listen to these stories and journey back in time. Think of what life was like for those who once crossed this rough country as you are climbing up and down the steep hills, clambering under the shady forest understory, and crossing these old creeks. We hope you enjoy the historical, cultural, and natural significance found along the trail and share the rich heritage of this area with friends.

A special thanks and acknowledgement to Joe Moffitt, whose book *An Afternoon Hike into the Past* inspired this audio tour. Also, special thanks to Ruth Ann Grissom, Rebecca Schoonover, Jim Plant, Don Childrey, Ken Robinson, Kevin Redding and Crystal Cockman for their work on collecting this group of stories and locations, and to Chris Moncrief for making this vision a reality as his Eagle Scout Project.

2. **Camp 5: *Joe Moffitt and his Boy Scout Camps***  
**GPS Location: 35.602541, -79.919012**

This is the first campsite that is directly on the Uwharrie Trail – Camp 5. Joe Moffitt and his boy scouts not only built the trail itself, but also constructed several camps along the way. Joe worked with Boy Scout Troop 570, the American Legion, to build 26 campsites total.

Joe would drive his Jeep as far as he could, and he and his boy scouts would carry the building materials by hand to the place where they wanted to build camp. The scouts would raise money for supplies, such as cement, by selling sassafras tea at local festivals and events. Some of

the items they used were recycled. For example, the metal signs with hand-stamped lettering were taken from the bottoms of old pans that had been rejected by factories due to imperfections.

The description plate was removed from Camp 5 in recent years. As you pass by other campsites, please respect the heritage of the trail and leave these signs in place. Future generations will enjoy reading the history and names of those who constructed these campsites for our continual use.

3. **Bingham Cemetery/ Homesite: *Life of Early Settlers in the Uwharries***  
**GPS Locations: House (35.583099, -79.927228), Graveyard (35.581426, -79.926762)**

Most old mountaineers were self-sufficient, acting as their own carpenter, forester, farmer and more. The famous mountaineer Christopher "Kit" Bingham came to Randolph County in 1785. With the help of his wife Dolly he built a home from the surrounding trees and brought up several children. Kit's land and fame once covered great distances around these hills. There is even a mountain in the southeast called Kit's Mountain.

When you reach the remains of a double chimney, fallen in late 2013, look for a plaque that marks the spot where Kit Bingham's homestead once stood. The old millpond site where flour and feed were made is southeast of the house.

A sign marks the family cemetery, which sits 200 yards south of the homeplace. The Bingham cemetery is where Kit and Dolly Bingham are buried, along with many of their children and grandchildren. Kit lived to be over 100 years old and died in his grandson's home. His grandson Rudsill is thought to be the last Bingham buried in the family cemetery.

In early spring you'll see a carpet of purple periwinkle blooming here. And between the house and the graveyard, an old barn used to house fine horses, cows and mules on the plantation. If you have a moment to spare, pause at the cemetery and allow the peace and quiet of the backwoods to bring you comfort.

When you reach the valley just north of Kit's Mountain, notice the deadly calm of the forest, especially in late fall. Many hikers have experienced an eerie feeling coming over them in this area. Perhaps it is the spirit of these early homesteaders trying to share their stories of times past.

4. **Bootleg Hollow: *Moonshining Heritage of the Uwharries***  
**GPS Locations: 35.601993, -79.913868**

The Uwharrie region has a long history of moonshining. Many have said that the racing heritage of Randolph County began with the need to bootleg liquor quickly from one destination to another and escape the revenuers who had found out about the operations.

Many years ago there was very little public work in the backwoods areas. When one homesteader had a tough job to do, all the neighbors would bring their saws and axes to help raise the barn or clear the new field. Since everyone worked together, no money was used or

needed. But some would trade a pig or chicken for a jar of white mule, white lightning, joy juice, or whatever that particular community called bootleg whisky.

The value of corn whisky was very good. Sometimes a settler who had fallen on hard times would set up a moonshine still in a remote part of the mountains and make a run of whiskey to buy seed and fertilizer for new crops. There was also the bootlegger who would make a business off of whiskey until he was caught by a revenuer or chased out of the community by the God-fearing settlers.

In Joe Moffitt's book, *An Afternoon Hike into the Past*, he explains the history of this particular site, known as Bootleg Hollow.

*The few remains of a moonshine still can be seen at Bootleg Hollow between Lost Branch and Twin Rocks. Revenuers caught the bootleggers in this hollow one summer night and the bullets flew about something fierce for awhile- wounding at least one bootlegger and causing two more to fall getting away. This fall dislocated a shoulder on one man and resulted in a broken thumb on the other. They hauled their barrels and equipment down over the rocky hill to the northwest in wagons with tow sacks tied around the hubs and wheels and with sacks tied over the horses' hooves to keep from making noise.*

**5. Rush Mine: *Gold Mining History, There's Gold in Them Hills*  
GPS Location: 35.602712, -79.904595**

Although not very well known, the Uwharries have a rich gold mining history. At one point in time, there were many active gold mining sites in the area. North Carolina was the site of the first documented gold discovery in the United States, and it was the location of most of the nation's gold production until 1848, which signaled the beginning of the California gold rush.

Legend has it that the streets of Troy were once paved with gold, that the dirt to construct them was brought from a mine in Eldorado, and citizens would find large nuggets right there in the pavement. Now gold prospecting is more hobby than occupation but it remains a popular pastime in this area and nationwide.

The following story is taken from Joe Moffitt's book, *An Afternoon Hike into the Past*.

*At the old Rush Mine located on the Uwharrie Trail, an old lady living at the Jackson house had an option on the land while prospecting the mine. She had hired two men to do the work when suddenly they discovered small nuggets of gold in the 18-foot hole. After news of the gold, she left for New York to buy equipment to work the mine. She had planned to return after ten days but died from a stroke in New York. The two men then left the mine with several small cloth bags and rode a wagon to the Northeast through the prominent Ulah settlement.*

*Later an 80-year-old man remembers sitting on the bank of the mine the last day it operated. Although he was a young boy at the time, he recalls seeing one of the men taking a gold nugget from the dirt about the size of a corn grain.*

If you wish, camp at the beautiful walled spring but watch out for rattlesnakes in the summer. And on winter nights when the moon is bright and the wind is moaning through the stately oaks, be sure to have your wits and your buddy with you.

6. **Cooper's Homesite & Graveyard: *Revolutionary War Hero and Ghost Tale***  
**GPS Location: Homesite (-79.944498, 35.584917), Graveyard (-79.941387, 35.58459)**

In the early years of our country, there were many hardships in life and little money for elaborate burials with coffins and preachers. The settlers often buried their dead where they could look after them, so many were buried on the farms where they had spent their lives. Here is the Cooper Graveyard where the members of the Cooper family have been laid to rest.

One interesting grave in this yard is that of Sterling Cooper, a Private in the United States Militia who fought during the Revolutionary War. His tombstone often gets covered with leaf litter, but if you look around just inside and to the left of the graveyard entrance, you can find it.

As an early settler in this area, Cooper lived with his family at the base of Cooper Mountain. But when influenza came into the area, he lost his wife and four kids.

One popular Uwharrie ghost tale revolves around the Cooper homesite. They say that Cooper could not deal with the deaths of his family and continued on acting as though they were still alive – setting places at the table for them and hanging out his children's clothes. When the post officer came to the house, he claimed to hear children laughing but found only Cooper inside. Some say they can still hear children playing near this old homesite.

7. **McArthur Property: *New Trailhead on High Pine Church Road***  
**GPS Location: -79.946283, 35.555467**

This is a new trailhead on High Pine Church Road that is still in construction as of 2014. The 45-acre McArthur Property will bring the Uwharrie Trail through the USFS Walker's Creek section. The original Uwharrie Trail went over King Mountain and out by Dewey Luther's home to Pisgah Covered Bridge Road. This section has been restored in recent years and can now be hiked as well, adding several more miles of trail. The acquisition of the McArthur Property was made in a partnership between the NC Zoo and The Land Trust for Central NC.

This unique property has frontage on High Pine Church Road that will provide landscape-scale views and allow the development of a new trailhead and small parking area. It will also add another 6 miles north from Thayer Road over King Mountain and the Walkers Creek area of the national forest, which will bring the length of the contiguous trail to nearly 30 miles. Thanks so much to the Zoo for making this project possible and enabling this next section of the Uwharrie Trail to be realized.

8. **Walker's Creek: *Water Wall and Dam, History of Grist Mills***  
**GPS Location: -35.54442, 79.95326**

The new section of the Uwharrie Trail will go past an old dam and water wall in the USFS Walker's Creek area. It is likely that the dam was once part of a gristmill. Gristmills were

commonly found structures across the Uwharrie landscape. These mills used waterpower to grind corn and wheat into cornmeal and flour, which were very important food items for early settlements in the area.

With the invention of the mechanical reaper during the late 1800s, wheat and corn production were moved out west where fields were flat and less rocky than the Uwharrie mountain area. As transportation by railroad became more common, local residents were able to buy cheaper corn and flour at general stores, leaving many gristmills of this area to be abandoned. But the old dams, millstones and larger mill structures remained in many areas.

There have been efforts in this area to remove some of these dams that no longer operate to help with fish passage. Nearby on the Uwharrie River once stood the three-story Lassiter Mill and dam. But in 2014, American Rivers and the US Fish and Wildlife Service worked with the landowner to remove the dam after it collapsed the year before.

The removal of the dam on the Uwharrie River opened it up for American shad spawning. American shad are anadromous, which means they spend most of their life at sea and come to fresh water to spawn or reproduce. In some parts of their range, they may travel more than 500 miles upstream and inland to their spawning grounds. Many return to the same spawning grounds every year. In early settler times, shad runs were critical for survival because settlers depended on them for food in early spring when winter food stores from last year's harvest were dwindling.

As part of a relicensing agreement on the Yadkin-Pee Dee River, American shad will soon be carried above Tillery dam. Because this is the only dam on the Uwharrie River, it will open up miles of river frontage for shad spawning once again.

**9. Camp 7: *Rattlesnakes in the Uwharries***  
**GPS Location: 35.523952, -79.948818**

Camp 7 is another one of Joe Moffitt's boy scout camps found along the Uwharrie Trail. This camp is called Twin Springs. If you follow a yellow blazed trail north of and at the base of King Mountain that leaves the Uwharrie Trail headed east, soon you will come to a double chimney made of rock that is complete with constructed fire grates and a sign marking it as an Eagle Scout project.

Below the list of leaders and participants, the sign pays tribute to the trailblazer Jim Green and warns to "Beware the Doom that Came to Eden – Snake Country." While rattlesnakes can be found in the Uwharries, this King Mountain area is a hotspot for these animals.

Rattlesnakes are often portrayed as dangerous, aggressive animals that seek out people to bite. But in most situations, rattlesnakes are calm and docile, relying on their camouflage to protect them. The only time they will try to strike a person is if they feel threatened or are stepped on. Of course, you should always take caution when walking through the woods and avoid encounters whenever possible.

Unfortunately, rattlesnakes are becoming very uncommon in many areas, mostly from habitat loss and intentional killing. Because of these actions, the eastern diamondback rattlesnake and

the eastern coral snake are on North Carolina's endangered species list, along with a number of other snakes that are becoming more rare. Like all species, snakes perform ecological functions such as keeping prey populations in check. The venom of some is even used for medicinal purposes. These captivating creatures have a place in the wild, and we should do what we can to preserve them for future generations to chance encounter from a safe distance on their future adventures.

**10. King Mountain: *Highest Peak in UNF proper, Old Fire Tower***  
**GPS Location: -79.954833, 35.517636**

After a bit of a climb, you have now reached the top of the highest peak in the Uwharrie National Forest proper, named King Mountain. The elevation here is approximately 1040 feet, and it boasts some of the best views of the surrounding Uwharrie hills during the winter. If you poke around, you might be able to find the concrete footings of a historic fire tower.

The US Forest Service initially began constructing fire towers across the country mostly to help fight fires. The goal was to put out a blaze as soon as it started, and fire towers were built to aid in active surveillance. More recently, the USFS has begun using prescribed fires as a management tool for habitat enhancement and hazard mitigation. There is even grant funding available to landowners who live within 10 miles of USFS properties to help with prescribed burning in efforts to avoid wildfires. Now satellites are replacing human surveillance. In the Uwharries, we do not rely on fire towers as much as we did in the past.

The tower here at King Mountain was a pole tower that was initially built on private land. But by 1941, this tower was deemed unsafe and impractical to repair, so the USFS bought 4.9 acres from the Auman family to construct a permanent tower on the site. Retired ranger Jessie Sanders remembers that the tower was torn down in the early 1960s. The USFS still owns this postage-stamp parcel, and the concrete footings are still intact. The LandTrust for Central North Carolina worked to protect this land surrounding the tract to provide a corridor for extending the Uwharrie Trail.

*(Special thanks to Ruth Ann Grissom for this site description)*

**11. Joe Moffitt Trailhead: *Newest Uwharrie Trailhead, honoring Trail's Founder***  
**GPS Location: -79.952833, 35.507392**

The Joe Moffitt trailhead on Thayer Road is the newest of all the Uwharrie Trailheads. It is named in honor of the Uwharrie Trail found and dedicated in December of 2013. The Land Trust for Central North Carolina purchased this property in 2011, and thanks to their efforts and those of a phenomenal group of volunteers, a new stretch of trail was developed on this property in 2013. This adds 4 miles of trail north from the Jumpin' Off Rock to this new trailhead.

This new trail will ascend to the top of Little Long Mountain and have panoramic views found nowhere else on the Uwharrie Trail. It then descends to Poison Fork Creek, a beautiful stream with the highest water quality designation given in our state. Unique aquatic species, fish and reptiles also live here and nowhere else.

**12. Little Long Mountain: *Panoramic Views and Piedmont Glade Communities***

**GPS Location: 35.500733, -79.952968**

Hiking the ridgelines and hillsides of the Uwharries, you pass through forests dominated by hickory, oak and sourwood. There are large patches of knee-high blueberry bushes, and the herbaceous layer is sparse. On occasion, an attentive and adventurous outdoor enthusiast might also run across natural areas that change abruptly and appear remarkably different from this typical forest.

Here on top of Little Long Mountain, you'll see a special natural community. Most hillsides in the Uwharries have boulders jutting from the forest floor, but here the rock is horizontal and more extensive. Parts of the rock are skimmed with a layer of soil. This is the recipe for a Piedmont glade.

Hike up a steep slope through the forest at Little Long Mountain, and near the top you will emerge into a clearing. An expanse of broomstraw is punctuated by stunted oaks and cedars. This native glade community houses a variety of unique flora and fauna. Look around and maybe you can find a native prickly pear cactus. Appalachian rock-pink (also known as *Talinum* or fameflower, *Phemeranthus teretifolius*), is here as well – a succulent that has a unique ability to hold onto what water is available on this rocky soil. Standing water on these exposed rocks is quite common.

At one point in time, this property had mature hardwood forests that opened up into the glades with panoramic views. But the property was clear-cut before The LandTrust for Central NC purchased it, and they are working hard to restore more natural forest to this site, partly by conducting prescribed burns. After The Land Trust acquired the property, the trail was rebuilt by volunteers in 2013.

The natural area at the top of this grassy glade allows a unique vantage point, so stop and enjoy the view. Elevation is approximately 940 feet.

13. **Diana Woodell's Grave: A Lonely Grave on Long Mountain**  
**GPS Location: 35.489042, -79.952239**

Several settlers and old mountain folks lived in the beautiful valley to the west of Long Mountain. Many years ago, a preacher came into the valley and set up the Brush Arbor Meeting, which met under a makeshift gazebo that he created from pole-timber and pine tops from these woods. The Arbor Meeting became so popular that they decided a church should be built here.

When Diana Woodell, the daughter of a settler who attended the Arbor, passed away in 1911, she was the first to be buried here next to the Arbor. At the time of her passing, it was believed that a church would soon be built, so she would be the first of many to rest in the future church's cemetery. But interest in the church soon died, the Arbor rotted away, the Woodells moved, and the cemetery was abandoned. No one else was ever laid to rest beside young Diana.

Legend has it that the spirit of little Diana Woodell haunted the old house across the creek as many strange things happened inside. So please, as you pass this lonely grave along the trail, place a flower on it, or tidy up a bit around the grave-- the ghost of little Diana will appreciate it!

**14. Jumpin Off Rock: *Guardian Ghost Wind***

**GPS Location: 35.480104, -79.947515**

The Jumpin Off Rock is probably one of the most iconic of Uwharrie locales. This beautiful bluff is a very short walk from a pull-off on Flint Hill Road just east from the Jumpin Off Rock Trailhead. Despite the name, this is not somewhere you want jump off from – as it is a long, rocky fall to the shallow Barnes Creek below. But it is a beautiful place. And with the bubbling cascades of this pristine stream, you will be hard pressed to find a more serene spot.

As with many areas in the Uwharries, there is another ghost story associated with the Jumpin' Off Rock. Fred Morgan calls it "Guardian Ghost Wind." As the story goes, two brothers took their father's gold and hid it in the Uwharrie hills. They decided to hide the gold under a boulder on a hill west across from Jumpin Off Rock. Unfortunately, one of the brothers decided to kill the other, so he could have the gold all to himself. But after the murder, but he went crazy with guilt and became a maniac who roamed the woods and terrorized the locals until his death.

He was never able to tell others where the treasure was hidden. And if you try to dig and look for the gold, even on a calm day, a storm and wind will arise to prevent you from finding it – the ghost of the first brother protecting his family's gold forever.

**15. Dark Mountain: *Dark Mountain Murders, Outlaw Cave and Licker Springs***

**GPS Location: - 79.960367, 35.468331**

As the trail ascends from the Jumpin Off Rock Trailhead, it begins the steep climb up Dark Mountain. The elevation will rise more than 500 feet. But when you make it to the ridgeline, enjoy the beautiful views especially in the winter.

The sinister origins of the name Dark Mountain come from a history of murders that took place here. Most notably, army deserters were hunted and killed here for refusing to fight. One deserter was killed on Paint Rock at the top of the mountain. Locals say that the red-orange spots will reappear if you try to wipe the stains away.

Nearby, Outlaw Cave overlooks Barnes Creek. Joe Moffitt mentions that the bootlegger Willie Smith became an outlaw here after murdering a revenuer. When he heard that the police were coming to arrest him, he fled with his family and escaped to this cave near Licker Springs.

**16. Panther Branch: *Pristine Streams and Panthers that Once Roamed These Valleys***

**GPS Location: -79.973703, 35.451394**

The Panther Branch stream and campsite is one of the prettiest spots on the trail. During the winter, the banks of the stream are interlaced with the beautiful golden leaves of beech trees and the greens of the mountain laurel, making for a very serene landscape.

This stream and other areas of the Uwharries, such as Panther Mountain in Randolph County, pay tribute to the history of mountain lions that once roamed these ancient hills. Puma, panther, cougar, catamount, mountain lion, and red tiger are all names for the same long-tailed, reddish-blond, 200-pound cat that once populated the entire eastern coast.



The US Fish and Wildlife Service officially declared the Eastern Cougar extinct just a few years ago. While hunting and trapping contributed to their decline, this species primarily became extinct from habitat loss and declining prey populations, specifically the white-tailed deer in the early 1900s.

A small panther subpopulation remains in Florida, the Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*). But the small numbers of even this species led to inbred abnormalities such as kinked tails and cowlicks. After a few Texas cougars were introduced to bring in more genetic diversity, the number of healthy panthers has increased although the total number is still below 100.

Because panthers require large areas of wilderness, efforts have also included the conservation of many acres of habitat. But without appropriate management, these panthers may likely suffer the same fate as others.

Although there are frequently tales of panther sightings in North Carolina, especially in the Uwharries, the majority of these reports are unsubstantiated. Most turn out to be foxes, bobcats, or escaped and not native pumas. Wildlife biologists inform us that if there were a sustainable population that could have remained in this area, we would have confirmed cases of sightings, and we likely would have found some hit by cars.

Although you are not likely to see a panther here, you can still stop and enjoy the spectacular beauty of this sparkling stream and imagine a time past when these wild and majestic creatures also called this place home.

**17. Morris Mountain: *Searching for Sasquatch***  
**GPS Location: -79.982322, 35.435269**

The Uwharries garnered national attention in 2012 as a site for *Animal Planet's* search for Bigfoot. Whether you believe in the possibility of this mythical creature, Morris Mountain is one of the prime searching spots for Bigfoot hunters.

*Local Ruth Ann Grissom writes from an interesting perspective when it comes to the quest for Bigfoot:*

*"The recent hoopla over the hunt for the legendary creature in the Uwharries has been a fun diversion – a topic of conversation with our neighbors or a reason to go for a hike on a sunny afternoon with camera crews from Animal Planet. I'm all in favor of anything that gets hundreds of people into the woods with their imaginations running wild. And I've been startled by redbud trees lurching from the woods at dusk – sprawling limbs laden with shaggy, brown pods can look eerily similar to hairy Sasquatch arms.*

*But as much as I loved the line of reasoning one local shared with the paper, Montgomery Herald – if there was a Bigfoot in the forest, he'd already be mounted on some guy's wall – I couldn't resist the urge to poke holes in his theory. But what if he hibernates during deer season? As another local told the Asheboro's Courier-Tribune, 'Nobody has proved there is one, and nobody has proved there's not.'*

*I've come to see this hunt for Bigfoot as a testament to the allure of the Uwharries. Even in our fractured Piedmont, these mountains remain mysterious. I'm heartened that people believe this region is big and wild enough to encompass something so improbable. It takes my frustration at what is unknown, turns it on its head, and revels in it. Instead of anger, it manifests as hope. It makes me want to join them, to entertain the possibility that Bigfoot might exist in the Uwharries. A track, a missing Zagnut, a blurry image, a hank of hair – these bits of evidence are irrelevant. Bigfoot is out there, in the landscape of our dreams."*

**18. Highway 109 Trailhead: *Land of the Longleaf Pine and Piedmont Prairies***  
**GPS Locations: Trailhead: -79.980733, 35.398847**  
**Longleaf: -79.976014, 35.400622**

As you hike through this last stretch of woods near Highway 24/27, you may spot an occasional longleaf pine tree. Native to the Southeastern United States, the longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) once covered an area larger than 90,000 million acres. Overharvesting and deforestation reduced the area that it historically covered to about 3%, while the majority of this is reforested longleaf.

Unlike many other species, Longleaf pine are very hardy and can survive and thrive in areas that experience frequent fires. They have a deep tap root, and are well adapted to survive ice and snow storms. These impressive trees can live to be over 500 years old. Historically, they provided turpentine, tar and resin for naval ships. Some of these trees that have been "boxed" to harvest the tar still survive today.

Longleaf may be classically thought of as more of a Sandhills or Coastal Plain ecosystem, but do grow in the Piedmont in more clay-like soils. Whereas the understory of a longleaf pine in the Sandhills will be dominated by wiregrass, here in the Piedmont a suite of native grasses are found there, such as Indian grass, big blue stem, and little blue stem. Conservation partners have been working to collect seed from USFS trees to restore this unique ecotype on other lands in the Uwharrie Region.

When longleaf pine savannas and Piedmont prairies dominated this landscape, rare wildflowers were often found in areas where full sunlight could reach the understories. Now many of these plants, including the federally endangered Schweinitz's sunflower, have been relegated to roadsides and utility rights-of-way. Efforts are ongoing to restore these native ecosystems to benefit these rare species.

**19. Buck Mountain Firetower**  
**GPS Location: -79.998794, 35.406667**

As you cross Highway 109, you will find yourself not too far from Buck Mountain tower. Rising from its 830-foot namesake in the Uwharrie community, this metal structure dates back to 1936 and was likely built by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The base of its 7-foot-by-7-foot cab is 94 feet from the ground. The tower used to be staffed consistently during dry weather, but now with limited resources, rangers are dispatched to monitor our forests only during extreme conditions. It is primarily used for locating fires after the USFS receives a smoke report.

A recently completed USFS study determined the Buck Mountain tower is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Many fire towers have been removed, so the ones that remain have a special significance. The Buck Mountain tower helps rangers protect our forests, but it also stands as a reminder of how our nation's history has been shaped by fire. The mailbox at the Uwharrie district ranger station in Troy even includes a replica of Buck Mountain fire tower.

*(Special thanks to Ruth Ann Grissom for this site description)*

**20. Yates Place: *Campgrounds and Military Uses of the Forest***  
**GPS Location: -79.994561, 35.366953**

Yates Place campsite is located just a short walk from the trail as it passes over Dusty Level Road. This was once an old homesite. Now a formal camping area with parking and vault toilets, Yates Place is a great location to gather with a number of friends for a group outing on the trail.

Like other areas around the Uwharries, you may encounter an occasional soldier while you are hiking or camping. The U.S. Army does regular maneuvers in the Uwharrie National Forest. In particular, the Army Special Forces performs Robin Sage training here to prepare them for being in the field in difficult conditions.

Thanks to the tough terrain and rural character of this area, it is the perfect spot for such training activities. This is another great tribute to the important resource this area provides for a variety of users.

**21. Dutchmans Creek: *Native Medicinal Plants of the Hardwood Forest***  
**GPS Location: -80.002858, 35.346467**

Here the Uwharrie Trail crosses Dutchmans Creek. Like many Uwharrie streams, this creek has high water quality and is home to a variety of neat plants and critters. Perhaps one of the most quantifiable reasons for preserving plant biodiversity is the value of medicinal herbs. From easing symptoms of the common cold to treating leukemia, plants help us in a variety of ways. The Uwharries have several interesting medicinal plants that many locals have grown up identifying while walking in the woods.

Joe Moffitt and many other locals are very knowledgeable about the native medicinal herbs of the Uwharrie Region. On creeks like this one, yellow root is particularly common. Yellow root can be used to treat digestive problems, sore throats, mouth sores, eye, and ear infections. Joe also mentions that wild comfrey and star grass are other native medicinal herbs.

Some areas in the Uwharries have the rare American ginseng (*panax quinquefolius*). Sometimes referred to colloquially as "sang," this plant is considered by some a cure-all, memory aid, stress reliever, and immunity booster. However, medical research shows conflicting results on its actual observed effects. Ginseng grows in the mountains and piedmont region along much of the eastern United States and can be found in rich, moist forests. However, the trade of ginseng is closely monitored as ginseng has a rank of special concern.

While many natural remedies have been discovered from these plants, there are still species that have yet to be identified, much less the possible benefits they could provide. This is true not just in rainforests and other diversity hotspots, but even here in our own region. These possibilities are just one more reason why we should take care of our lands and conserve biologically important areas, so we won't miss out on the wonderful opportunities nature can provide.

22. **Rocky Outcrops of Dennis Mountain: *Geology and Native American Heritage***  
**GPS Location: -80.037433, 35.3473**

As you climb Dennis Mountain, notice the cap of rhyolite rock protecting the top of the mountain. Rhyolite forms the tops of all the higher hills in the Uwharries. Because of its hardness and density, rhyolite deposits resist the erosion which cuts away so much of the softer volcanic rocks of the area. Geologists call these cone-shaped mountains with hard rock caps "monadnocks." Pilot Mountain and King's Pinnacle are excellent examples of monadnocks in other regions of North Carolina.

The rhyolite on the mountaintops originally occurred as massive chunks and boulders, but the area's Native Americans extracted much of the rock to create the black, grey and white slivers found on these mountains today. A large amount of quarrying by Native Americans occurred historically in the Uwharrie Mountains. Because Rhyolite is an igneous, volcanic rock that is easily flaked and shaped, it was used to make tools such as arrowheads, spear tips and gardening tools. If rhyolite cools too quickly, crystals can form in the rock, which makes it less desirable for tool-making. Rhyolite is the best material in the southeastern U.S. for making stone tools, and some of the best rhyolite is here in the Uwharries.

The first evidence of Indians in the area dates back to 8,000 B.C.—a long time by human standards but a mere moment in geological time. So as you stand on this ancient hill, take a pause and experience the history of the region. Close your eyes and envision what the area would have looked like years ago when quarrying was still actively occurring. How would landscape have been different? What would have been the same? Enjoy the experience and please respect the area and others who come after you by not removing any rocks or artifacts, so future generations can also enjoy the opportunity to learn about the history of our region.

(Information taken from Morrow Mountain State Park Management Plan)

23. **Lawrenceville: *The Lost Town of Lawrenceville***  
**GPS Location: 35.310616, -80.040466**

If you walk just a short distance down the woods east from the Wood Run Trailhead, you'll find the remains of the Lost Town of Lawrenceville, an important historical and cultural asset for Montgomery County.

The original town of Lawrenceville is located about 1.5 miles east of the Pee Dee River along U.S. Highway 24-27 in Montgomery County, NC. Lawrenceville was the largest town in the county by the 1820s and throughout the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The town was named after Captain James Lawrence, a naval officer during the War of 1812. And it became the county seat in 1817.

Lawrenceville was an active place. It has been estimated that the population of the town reached as many as 400 to 500 people. There was a post office and at least two stores. Then in 1821 there were plans to open an Academy for boys and girls.

When plans were made to divide Montgomery County into halves in 1844, the county seat was moved to Troy. Land west of the Pee Dee River became Stanly County, and the citizens decided to select a more centrally located county seat. West's Old Field was chosen, and this new town several miles east of Lawrenceville was named Troy.

Although there is one existing structure here, it is not original to Lawrenceville. All that remains now of this original lost town are several dwelling chimney piles.

*(Taken from The Lost Town of Lawrenceville, Montgomery County, North Carolina: A Short History and Archaeological Observations By Kenneth W. Robinson, Wake Forest University Archaeology Laboratories, November 30, 2007)*

24. **Conclusion AKA Wood Run – 24/27 Trailhead:**  
**GPS Location: 80.043453, 35.310536**

***Thank You & More Information.*** Thank you for journeying through time with us to honor the trailblazers and advocates of The Uwharrie Trail. We hope that your explorations have given you a glimpse of the strong connection between the local community and the beautiful Uwharrie landscape. Whether it was by paying your respects to a lonely trailside grave, imagining yourself as a goldminer, or feeling a strange sense around you of those who lived here in times past, we hope you have in some way felt the rural character of the beautiful Uwharrie landscape.

There are many ways to help us rebuild the fragmented Uwharrie Trail. Please contact the Uwharrie National Forest (910-576-6391) or The Land Trust for Central North Carolina (336-633-0143 or 704-647-0302) to learn more.