



**BRIEF HISTORY OF
CAMP ROCKMONT, BLACK MOUNTAIN
COLLEGE AND BEFORE...**

BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH
MR. JOHN CORKRAN ON OCTOBER 14, 2020

Before becoming Camp Rockmont, (1959-today), this was the campus of Black Mountain College (1933-1957). John Corkran lived on campus from 1944-1950, moving to Black Mountain when he was 8 years old. His father taught history and English at the college. Faculty and their families had dining privileges at the dining hall allowing Mr. Corkran the opportunity to meet many of the legendary faculty including Merce Cunningham and Buckminster Fuller. Several professors were also hikers.

Mr. Corkran reminisced about the huge trees that grew along stream banks and the mountain views with massive skeletons of the American Chestnut trees that were killed by a blight 40 years earlier. "This was the greatest ecological disaster. All that remains of these trees is the chestnut paneling that still exists in the hallway of Camp Rockmont offices which are housed in the original facilities building of Black Mountain College."

Before Black Mountain College, this area was planned as a recreational area for Swannanoa's Grovemont neighborhood. It was also the home of Mr. Chrisman, a Black Mountain barber shop owner, who lived there until until 1946 or 1947. People living on campus used to go to Mr. Chrisman's (aka "Shorty") barber shop in Black Mountain to discuss local news and history. Shorty used to talk to John's father about the natural environment and hiking trails in the area. After living on campus for 6 years, John went into the Forest Service where he was responsible for trail blazing.

**Camp Rockmont Treasured
Trees can be viewed only during
months when summer camps
are not in session, visiting from
May 15th - August 15th is
permitted. Please call office ahead
of time and leave a message to
notify them of your visit to view the
trees. Camp Rockmont office:
(828) 686-3885.**

**THANK YOU FOR JOINING US ON
THIS SPRING 2022 TREASURED
TREE WALK - WE TRULY
APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!**



OUR PURPOSE

- Bring public awareness to these valuable and irreplaceable trees
- Encourage stewardship of our urban forest
- Protect trees from indiscriminate removal or irreparable damage during development
- Raise awareness of the diversity, sensitivity and importance of the tree canopy

MORE ABOUT US

To read more about our program, make a donation, or find out how to nominate a tree, visit us online at:

www.SVTreeAlliance.com

SPRING 2022

SWANNANOVA VALLEY
TREE ALLIANCE

**TREASURED
TREE**

Walk

**CELEBRATING
EARTH DAY**

SCAN CODE WITH YOUR PHONE
CAMERA TO READ MORE ABOUT OUR
PROGRAM, MAKE A DONATION, OR FIND
OUT HOW TO NOMINATE A TREE ONLINE:

www.SVTreeAlliance.com



The 6 Treasured Trees featured here today were nominated by: HAP ENDLER (February 2020)
Owned by: CAMP ROCKMONT

32



Tulip Poplar | *Liriodendron tulipifera*: 35.631272, -82.364200
DBH: 38 inches - Estimated Age: Growing here since 1900

33



Tulip Poplar | *Liriodendron tulipifera*: 35.630906, -82.363931
DBH: 40 inches - Estimated Age: Growing here since 1900



The Tulip Poplar is in the Magnolia Family and is unrelated to true poplars like the cottonwood and aspen. Flowers are orange and yellow and the size and shape of tulip flowers. Leaves are cat-face shaped. This Tulip Poplar is near the former classrooms of Black Mountain College, providing shade for the building. Today, this building serves as the offices for Camp Rockmont. The tulip tree is the largest, most abundant, and most commercially valuable hardwood in the eastern forest, occurring from Florida to Ontario Canada. It replaced the American Chestnut in these attributes after they were lost in the early 1900s to the Chestnut Blight. The tallest Tulip tree today is growing in the GSMNP near Cataloochee and is 191 ft tall. The largest tree in the Eastern US by board foot is another tulip tree in the same cove. Tulip trees can live for 500 years. They often occupy nearly pure stands in bottomland or cove forest and are less common in areas prone to drought such as south facing slopes. They are susceptible to a weevil that can defoliate them in extreme drought conditions. The Tulip tree has a lower ecological value than most other hardwoods, including oaks and the American Chestnut it replaced in the forest. It doesn't produce a nut crop with value to wildlife and acts as a host plant to a relatively small number of insects - 28 species of lepidoptera compared with Oaks (532) and Cherry (456). The tulip tree doesn't make the top 30 list of ecologically important tree species, which is unfortunate considering the amount of acreage they dominate. It is a very important timber species. In addition to the high economic value of tulips for lumber, their bark is useful for making shingles. The inner bark is also a very good tinder for creating fire even in wet conditions.

34



American Sycamore | *Platanus occidentalis*: 35.628549, -82.363294
DBH: 46 inches - Estimated Age: Planted circa 1915



Sycamores grow in moist areas along streams and rivers. George Washington measured a 13 foot diameter sycamore in Ohio. As sycamores mature they often grow hollow, providing habitat for bears, raccoons, birds, etc. The hollows of old sycamores were used to house livestock, even for Native Americans to live in while on expedition or while early settlers were building a house. Sycamore seed pods are balls of feathery seeds that remain on trees in winter and spread with the spring breeze. These sycamores were planted along the entryway into Eden Hall as part of the campus of Black Mountain College, which became Camp Rockmont in 1959. According to John Corkran (see 'A Brief History of Camp Rockmont'), one of these American Sycamore served as 'Home Base' for the faculty and their families during after lunch baseball games when he lived here while his father was a professor at Black Mountain College.

35



Yellow Buckeye | *Aesculus flava*: 35.628549, -82.363294
DBH: 46.5 inches - Estimated Age: Growing here since 1870



Yellow Buckeye is the largest member of the buckeye family. Others such as red buckeye are small trees or large shrubs. This buckeye has large yellow raceme flowers in spring that are bee pollinated. The buckeye nut matures in fall. They are not a food source for wildlife as they contain poisonous saponins. Saponins are only mildly poisonous to humans and buckeyes were an important food source for native Americans who roasted and then leached them in flowing water after slicing them open. Buckeyes are an important component of rich cove and bottomland forest. They are the first tree to leaf out in spring. Their wood is valuable because of its light weight. Mr. John Corkran recalled that this Yellow Buckeye is growing near a path that lead to the headwaters of the Swannanoa River near islands where students would swim. When he lived on the campus of Black Mountain College from 1944-1950, the river was located next to Lake Eden Road. A berm was later built which borders the road today.

36



American Beech | *Fagus grandifolia*: 35.627947, -82.362854
DBH: 35 INCHES (nearly 3') - Estimated Age: Growing here since 1870



The American Beech is in the Fagaceae family. Beech nuts are an important food for turkey, deer, grouse, squirrels, etc. though they are not as valuable ecologically as other members of the family, Oak or American Chestnut. Trees do not reach reproductive maturity until they are 40 to 50 years old. They are marcescent, meaning that leaves remain on lower branches and young trees all winter. This is to prevent deer from eating the tender buds. The wood isn't valuable for timber because it easily bends, making it useful for furniture or bowl making. They are selected against in forestry production areas because they can outcompete other more valuable tree species over time due to their shade tolerance and tendency to reproduce asexually by root suckers. At 5000 ft they often form monoculture beech gaps which they share with a grass layer of Pennsylvania sedge. They are the only tree in the eastern forest to have smooth bark at maturity other than the American Holly. You can often recognize them by the occurrence of carvings in the smooth bark, this has actually been listed as an ID characteristic in taxonomy text dating back 200 years. There is still at least one beech living today which has carvings in it made by the pioneer Daniel Boone in 1760 in Tennessee. Boone often marked his route with these carvings, which were followed by the western expansion of colonists into Kentucky. Beech tree leaves were also used by early settlers to stuff mattresses. This massive American Beech is located inside the split rail fence on Lake Eden Road between the fence and the soccer field used by Camp Rockmont attendees.

37



Eastern Hemlock | *Tsuga canadensis*: 35.628911, -82.364582
DBH: 47 inches - Estimated Age: Planted before 1920



This Eastern Hemlock, at the end of the driveway from Lake Eden Road to Eden Hall, is around 150 years old and is located where there are some other old Hemlocks. When E.W. Grove developed Grovemont, he built Eden Hall and the small round building next to it with the same smooth river stones that are a trademark of his architecture. "Rockmont" was designated as the recreational area for Grovemont. These Hemlocks are healthy due to their being treated for the Woolly Adelgid, which has caused a mass extinction throughout its range in the Appalachian Forests.