



Jocassee Journal

Information and News about the Jocassee Gorges



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Fall/Winter 2020

Volume 21, Number 2



Wildflower sites in Jocassee Gorges were made possible by special funding from Duke Energy's Habitat Enhancement Program. (SCDNR photo by Greg Lucas)

Duke Energy funds colorful Jocassee pollinator plants

Insects and hummingbirds flocked to wildflower sites

Several places within the Jocassee Gorges received a colorful "facelift" in 2020, thanks to special funding through Duke Energy's Habitat Enhancement Program (HEP).

As part of the Keowee-Toxaway relicensing agreement related to Lakes Jocassee and Keowee, Duke Energy collects fees associated with docks and distributes the monies each year for projects within the respective watersheds to promote wildlife habitat improvements.



South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) Jocassee Gorges Project Manager Mark Hall approached the HEP committee in 2019 with a proposal to establish wildflower patches throughout Jocassee Gorges to benefit "pollinator species." Pollinator species include

bats, hummingbirds, bees, butterflies and other invertebrates that visit wildflowers and subsequently distribute pollen among a wide range of fruit-bearing and seed-bearing plants.

The fruits and seeds produced are eventually consumed by a host of game and non-game animals. Pollinator species

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Mark Hall, Jocassee Gorges Project land manager, admires some of the pollinator species that were planted in Jocassee Gorges earlier this year. (SCDNR photo by Cindy Thompson)

Jocassee wildflower sites buzzing with life

Continued from page 1

play a key role in the complex, ecological chain that is the foundation for diverse vegetation within Jocassee Gorges.

In early 2020, undesirable vegetation was eliminated on several unproductive, open fields within Jocassee. A special mix of native wildflowers was planted in early May and luckily, mother nature provided the summer rains to nurture the wildflower crop. Several miles of roadsides were also hydro-seeded with the wildflower mixture to further promote the benefits associated with pollinator species throughout the property.

The special seed mixture carries a hefty price tag of more than \$45 per pound, as compared to a standard seed mix that runs a few dollars per unit. The HEP provided the funding required for the more expensive planting.

Jocassee Gorges supports an incredible and diverse landscape. However, nearly 99 percent of the area is totally forested and thus, heavily shaded. Roadsides and some small, scattered fields represent the few places where sunlight penetrates to allow herbaceous, flowering plants to flourish. Intensive management of the small percentage of open areas

is a very important endeavor. Several additional miles of roadsides will be treated in the spring of 2021.

During late Summer 2020 the new wildflower patches were inspected. The sites were literally buzzing with life! Bees of all descriptions, hummingbirds and hundreds of butterflies bounced among the new, colorful foliage gathering nectar and doing their job—spreading pollen. Such spectacles of nature are adding a new dimension to an already amazing Wildlife Management Area. Visitors, new and old, are bound to appreciate those new diamonds in the rough of the Jocassee Gorges. 



The Franklin Gravely Monument site on Camp Adger Road in northern Pickens County was covered with wildflowers in September. (SCDNR photo by Greg Lucas)

2020 mountain bear season third-highest on record

Hunters harvested 116 bears during two-week season

Hunters in Regions One and Two killed a total of 116 bears during South Carolina's 2020 mountain bear season.

"This year's bear harvest was the third-highest on record," said Tammy Waldrop, Upstate black bear biologist for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR).

In Region 1, hunters harvested 110 bears. Fifty-three were taken during the still hunt, which is the first week of the season. Pickens County hunters accounted for 20 bears during the still hunt season, 14 males and six females. Greenville County hunters harvested 20 bears during the still hunt season, with an even split between males and females. Oconee County's hunters killed 13 bears during the still hunt—five males and eight females.

During the party dog hunt, the second week of the bear season, hunters killed 57 bears. Oconee County led the way with a total of 35 bears—17 males and 18 females. Pickens County accounted for 15 bears during the dog season, eight males and seven females. Greenville County hunters killed seven bears during the dog season—six males and one female.

In Region 2, which is considered the Piedmont, the still

hunt accounted for six bears. Five were killed in Pickens County: three males and two females. Spartanburg County hunters killed one bear, a male. This is the second year that Region 2 has been included in the fall Upstate bear hunt.



A large crop of acorns helped kept the bears close to their home ranges, according to SCDNR. (SCDNR photo)

The largest bear of the season came from Pickens County and was taken during the still hunt on private land. The black bear weighed 445 pounds.

A large crop of acorns helped kept the bears close to their home ranges, according to Waldrop. "The acorn crop was good for most oak species this year," she

said. "White oaks were really good, and it was a bumper crop. The natural food availability was widespread across the Upstate, so the bears did not have to move around much to find food."

"White oaks were really abundant, and it was a bumper crop. The natural food availability was widespread across the Upstate, so the bears did not have to move around much to find food."

--Tammy Waldrop, SCDNR wildlife biologist

Waldrop said many hunters complained that the abundance of wild hogs caused dogs to lose track of bears, and to get on the trail of hogs instead, often "baying up" the hogs and getting injured.

"Hogs are a nuisance wildlife species that do a lot of damage to the habitat," she said. "They out-compete native wildlife species for the natural food supply. They can also interfere with dog hunting." 



The Sassafras Mountain Overlook in northern Pickens County, the highest point in South Carolina at 3,553 feet, offers the perfect jumping-off point for Geocaching adventures. (SCDNR photo by Danielle Kent)

Rocky Bottom High!

Try Geocaching at Sassafras Mountain as your next adventure in Jocassee Gorges

By Tony McDade

On your next visit to the spectacular new Overlook atop Sassafras Mountain, why not take time for a Geocaching adventure?

Geocaching is a captivating hobby for everyone, from families and scout troops to clubs of all sorts. It's like a high-tech treasure hunt. Geographical coordinates are used to find camouflaged containers that are secreted away...sometimes hidden in plain sight. Some specialized types of geocaches focus on sites with natural or historical significance (but don't involve finding a container). Use a handheld GPS device, or just your smartphone (for iPhone or Android, free apps to make Geocaching adventures fun: <https://www.cgeo.org/> or visit Geocaching.com) to home in on these hidden gems...and voila!

Geocaching at Sassafras has something for everyone. Hiking the Foothills Trail? Don't miss the six classic hides among the crags and crevices near Chimneytop Gap. Fascinated by geology? The "Sassafras Mountain Earthcache" is perfect for you! Wondering about the

weather? A cool "Virtual Cache" leads you to discover a "secret" QR code that reveals the area's meteorological mysteries in real time.

Finding all five stages of the Adventure Lab Cache means grabbing a selfie astride the stunning Compass Rose at the center of the Sassafras Overlook, and then trekking over to the nearby tripoint—a geographical rarity where three major watersheds converge.

Breathtaking panoramic vistas make majestic Sassafras Mountain truly one of the treasures of our state. Whether you're a veteran or newbie Geocacher, come find elevation with elation as you explore the geo-wonders of South Carolina's highest place! 🌿

'Geocaching is a captivating hobby for everyone, from families and scout troops to clubs of all sorts. It's like a high-tech treasure hunt.'

(Tony McDade (also known as OconeeBell) recently retired following a career in ministry and non-profit service, including at First Baptist Church in Clemson and United Ministries in Greenville. He and his wife, Cam (aka OconeeBelle), enjoy hiking, geocaching, and especially being Ainsley's grandparents. From Tony: "I borrowed the title for this article from the name of a perplexing hide on the Foothills Trail, just west of the Chimneytop Gap access point. Glenn Allen, aka rods&ropes, was a primo 'cacher who devised some of the Upstate's most diabolical...I mean, delightful! ...geocaches.")

Hagood Mill hosts Our Native Roots Interpretive Trail

Petroglyph Site one of many stops looking at Native American life

By Katie Mann

The Hagood Creek Petroglyph Site is located a stone's throw from the Historic Hagood Mill. The Petroglyph Site is a museum that boasts the most accessible petroglyphs in the state of South Carolina.

The site houses a large boulder with 32 distinct petroglyphs; 18 represent people, and several are abstracts, but they all have one thing in common – THEY ARE AWESOME.

The prehistoric petroglyphs were discovered in modern times in 2003 by Michael Bramlett. Bramlett notified archaeologist Tommy Charles, who included the site on his South Carolina Rock Art Survey. The Hagood Creek Petroglyph Site opened in 2016. To view the petroglyphs, visitors will move from the museum lobby into the main viewing room, where folks can see a narrated light show explaining specific petroglyphs and the story of their modern discovery. The program is designed for the enjoyment of a variety of audiences – small school children, academics, local community, and international tourists.

The Petroglyph Site Museum is handicapped accessible and climate controlled. In addition to the boulder that is home to the prehistoric petroglyphs, visitors will find information from Tommy Charles's book "Discovering South Carolina's Rock Art" displayed on the walls, see "portable petroglyphs" from the area, hear a video with the story of the discovery and dig, and also be able to view the new Paul West Collection of hundreds of Native American artifacts, art, and books. West donated his lifelong collection to the management of the Hagood Mill Historic Site. The Crawford Collection of Native American artifacts and tools are also on display. There is a large conference table where visitors can sit and pore over

the wealth of knowledge in the donated library.

The Hagood Creek Petroglyph Site is just one stop on Our Native Roots Interpretive Trail, the latest installment at the Hagood Mill Historic Site. Our Native Roots Interpretive Trail includes many stops where visitors can learn about different aspects of Native American life, including, but not limited to, a sacred

fire circle, a medicine wheel garden, a dugout canoe (burned out on a Third Saturday), and a prehistoric stone mortar. You can see a replica of an earthen oven being built by Eagle Scouts from Pickens. The interpretive trail is close to completion. Pick up a map/key of the Native Roots Trail in the Mercantile or on the Kiosk on the Pavilion side and take a self-guided tour. The Native Roots Trail was partially funded by the Art of Community, a division of the South Carolina Arts Commission.

In-person field trips may be arranged for families, school and

home-schooled groups. In addition, Hagood Mill staff and volunteers are working on virtual field trip packages of the Petroglyph Center, Museum, and Native Roots Trail plus Native American way of life and artifacts discovery and identification. These, along with other virtual field trips, will be available starting in January.

The site is always open dawn to dusk but the Mill, Petroglyph Center, cabins, and the Mercantile are all open Wednesday through Saturday, 10-4. The old Mill runs every third Saturday and grinds grits and cornmeal for sale. Local artisans show crafts of our past and musical events also take place.

Check out the Hagood Mill website at www.hagoodmillhistoricsite.com, its Facebook page or call (864) 898-2936. 🌿

(Katie Mann is assistant director of Hagood Mill Historic Site.)



The Hagood Creek Petroglyph Site is a museum that boasts the most accessible petroglyphs in the state of South Carolina.
(Photo courtesy of Hagood Mill Historic Site)

Where in the world

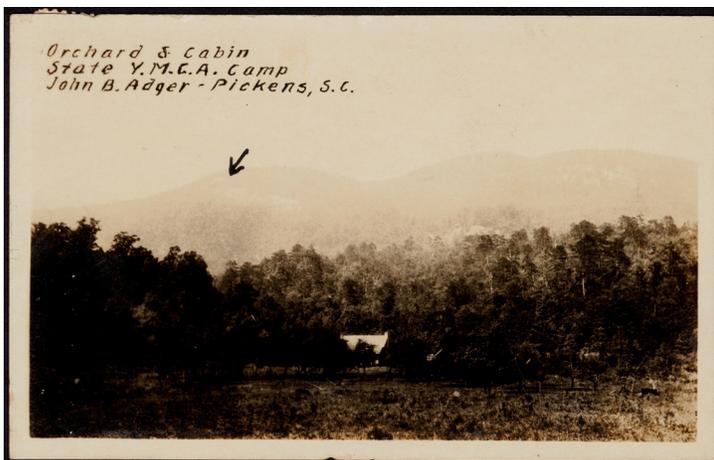
YMCA camp was the Jocassee place to be from 1926 to 1937

By Dennis Chastain

I sometimes wonder just how many people, either walking along the Palmetto Trail or following the old logging road from Horse Mountain, find themselves in the spot where topo maps show something called “Camp Adger.” They must wonder, “So, where’s the camp?” There’s nothing here but an old logging road with a perennial mud hole, two wildlife food plots, and a pretty little mountain stream called Emory Creek.”

Camp Adger really was a camp at one time, a YMCA camp; thought to be one of the first of its type in the country, and quite the thing during its relatively short lifespan. Oh, the stories this little upland valley could tell. Nestled in between the embracing arms of Long Ridge, a prominent prong coming off Pinnacle Mountain, and another big ridge peeling off nearby Horse Mountain, this little cloistered upland valley was once filled with the laughter, cheers, jeers and horseplay of hundreds of young school-aged boys from all around the Palmetto State. And for one week each summer, you could stand on the surrounding peaks and hear the squeals and giggles of young girls diving off the high dive into the chilly spring-fed water of the man-made swimming lake.

It all began in 1904 when John B. Adger, a mechanical engineer from Charleston moved to Belton, S.C., and built a hydro-power plant that delivered electricity to Belton’s burgeoning textile industry. Adger attained considerable wealth from this enterprise, and having already been a big supporter of the YMCA in Charleston,



This postcard from the early 1900s shows a cabin and orchard at Camp Adger.



This group, which visited the remains of Camp Adger a number of times, included Dennis Chastain, Jack Gantt, Vic Chastain, Mike Coggeshall and

acquired a 165½-acre tract of remote mountain land and donated it to the organization for a summer camp. That was in 1924.

It took a couple of years to raise the funds and do the planning to actually build the camp. Camp John B. Adger finally opened to great acclaim in 1926. There was hardly a week that went by during the following decade of summers that there was not some news item in the local newspaper about the goings on at Camp Adger. And there was plenty to tell. Just getting to and from the remote site was an adventure. The only way in was along the old Sasfras Gap Toll Road, first chartered in 1858, which had been built along the route of a Cherokee footpath, shown on 19th century plats as the “Buncombe Trail.”

Camp Adger really was a time, a YMCA camp, one of the first of its type in

The old toll road began at Wade Chastain’s home at Gauley Falls, now the Rock Golf Club and Resort, near the intersection of SC Highway 11 and US Highway 178. Several times each summer, Wade Chastain hauled the supplies and camping equipment on a horse-drawn wagon, while the campers and staff (most of whom were

What is Camp Adger?



of years ago, included a former camper. From left are author and Dr. Dan Spearman. (SCDNR photo by Tom Swaynham)

from the Lowcountry and Midlands of South Carolina) followed on foot along the one-and-a-half-mile uphill trek.

Several years ago, I rounded up an impressive group of knowledgeable people and made a trip up there to see what remnants we could find of the long extinct camp. Jack Gantt had been a celebrated and widely revered leader of Boy Scout Troop 51 in Pickens and had also been a camper at Camp Adger in his youth. Dan

Spearman, a retired veterinarian and consummate outdoorsman had hunted extensively in the Camp Adger area in the 1960s and had used old wood from the fallen down campers quarters to build himself a hunting hut. My cousin, Vic Chastain, was Wade

Chastain's son and had vivid memories of where things were when the camp was active. Mike Coggeshall, an anthropologist from Clemson University, was studying the history of the area. And rounding out the crew was Tom Swaynham, a Pickens native, who at that time was the SCDNR regional wildlife biologist and is now statewide assistant chief of wildlife.

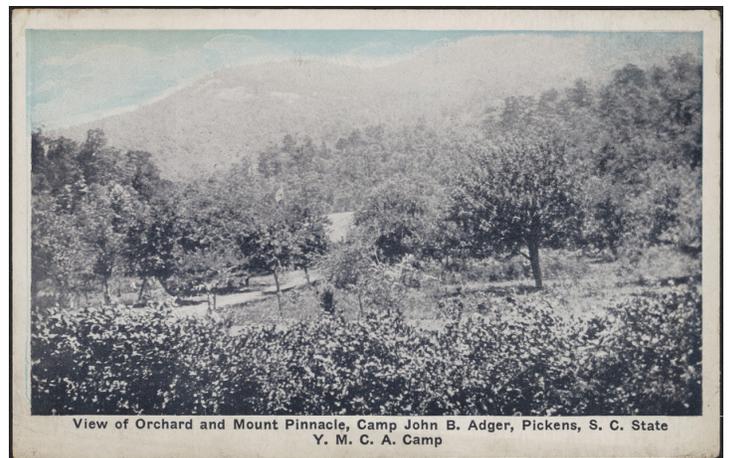
was a camp once upon a time, thought to be one of the best in the country.

By mid-morning, we had been able to locate the site of all six of the primitive, sawmill slab-sided, camper cabins, the Commissary where all the meals were served, along with the site of the old lake bed, now barely discernible from the surrounding terrain. Jack's most vivid memory of his days as a camper was the Bath Hole, a small pool in Emory Creek, where the campers were required every morning to strip down and bathe in the frigid stream before breakfast. Jack said he dreaded it every night as he went to bed, and it always took him an hour or so to get warmed back up after getting dressed.

Despite the fact that there was no electricity, no running water and nothing more than an outhouse for a restroom; for nine bucks a week, a camper was treated to delicious home-cooked meals, swimming and canoeing, nightly story-telling around the flickering light of a communal campfire ring, memorable field trips, lessons in first-aid and various crafts, along with daily Bible study. For some unknown reason, (possibly the Great Depression), following the 1937 summer session, Camp Adger disappeared from the public records.

Sadly, I must report that Jack Gantt, Dan Spearman and Vic Chastain have all passed away since our brief but immensely rewarding attempt to rescue the lost history of Camp John B. Adger. My wife, Jane, proofread this manuscript for me and pointed out that there is a lesson to be learned here, and it is this: Take the time to listen to the stories that our older friends and relatives have to tell. Listen and take notes. When they are gone, those stories are also gone forever. 🌿

(Dennis Chastain is an Upstate naturalist and historian who has written for South Carolina Wildlife magazine for more than three decades.)



Pinnacle Mountain can be seen in the background of this Camp Adger postcard.



The most popular spot to take a photograph of Table Rock has received further protection, thanks to the conservation group Upstate Forever. (Photo courtesy of Upstate Forever)

Iconic view of Table Rock further protected

Grant Meadow will continue to be favorite spot for photographers

Upstate Forever, a nonprofit conservation organization that protects critical lands, waters, and the unique character of Upstate South Carolina, recently completed a conservation project further protecting the iconic view of Grant Meadow and Table Rock in Pickens County.

Nestled at the base of Table Rock and hugging Cherokee Foothills Scenic SC Highway 11, the recent addition of 21 protected acres joins a 36-acre property that was placed under a conservation easement in 2013.

The Grant family, owners of this beloved property, feel strongly about preserving the meadow's beauty and long-distance views for generations to come.

"My dad had acquired this property in 1950," said Hoyt Grant. "I took an interest in it early on helping clear it and fence it for pasture land, which started my appreciation and love for this land. Being close to Table Rock State Park, my family enjoyed spending time and making memories there. I was able to acquire the additional 21 acres from my brother before he passed

away this year, and I knew I wanted to keep it protected for the future."

Grant Meadow will continue to be managed as a hay meadow, ensuring its iconic view remains unobstructed. In addition to breathtaking views, the property contains two tributaries of the South Saluda River and prime

soils (having physical and chemical characteristics as determined by the USDA).

"The view is a favorite photo spot for visitors young and old," Grant said, "and I feel very blessed to have a part in protecting its beauty."

Upstate Forever works with landowners, communities, and local stakeholders to balance growth with the protection of our natural resources. We focus our work on the ten counties of Abbeville, Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, Oconee, Pickens, Spartanburg and Union. For more information about Upstate Forever, visit www.upstateforever.org. 



Protecting Land & Water | Advocacy | Balanced Growth

Duke Energy funds exhibits' expansion at Jocassee Gorges Visitor Center

New exhibits chronicle Jocassee Valley, impact of Cherokee Indians on landscape

Duke Energy recently funded an expansion and improvement of exhibits at the Jocassee Gorges Visitor Center at Keowee-Toxaway State Park in northern Pickens County.

The project was part of the agreement for a new 30-year operating license for Duke Energy's Keowee-Toxaway Hydroelectric Project, approved in 2016 by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which allows the company to continue operating the Jocassee Pumped Storage Hydro Station, Keowee Hydro Station and associated lakes.

The Jocassee Gorges Visitor Center houses exhibits about the region's extraordinary natural diversity, the region's importance

as a scientific research destination, the history of the people who lived there in the past and features a three-dimensional topographic map of the region. The gift shop located in the Jocassee Gorges Visitor Center, along with the Center, is open daily from 11 a.m. to noon and 4-5 p.m.

New exhibits at the Jocassee Gorges Visitor Center include panels on The Cherokee and Jocassee Valley, and hands-on interpretive "flip" displays on plants and animals of the Jocassee Gorges and Cherokee Clans.

An interpretive panel about Fort Prince George (1753-1768) was installed in the kiosk at Keowee Town Access Area. Digital presentations on the hydroelectric development of the Jocassee and Keowee stations, along with one about Cherokee Indians, have been posted and made publicly accessible on

the Duke Energy website. The digital presentations can be accessed and downloaded at <https://www.duke-energy.com/community/lakes/hydroelectricrelicensing/keowee-toxaway/keowee-toxaway-project> under the "Presentations" link at the bottom of the page.

For visitors who are curious about the Jocassee Valley pictures on display in the Jocassee Gorges Visitor Center, it is now possible to learn the identification of the people and places in the display, thanks to Claudia Whitmire Hembree, author of "Jocassee Valley," the most comprehensive history book on the Jocassee region. She has compiled a guide with identification of the photographs at the Jocassee Center, and it is available to visitors. Some of the questions answered are:

- * Who are those "old timers" who once called Jocassee home?
- * Who built Chapman Bridge?
- * What did the original bridge look like? 



Claudia Whitmire Hembree has compiled a guide with identification of the photographs at the Visitors Center. She is shown in the photo presenting the notebook to Kevin Blanton, superintendent of Keowee-Toxaway State Park.



A panel on the Cherokee is among the new exhibits at the Jocassee Gorges Visitors Center, funded by Duke Energy. The Visitor Center is at Keowee-Toxaway State Park.

'Keowee' turns 25

Book by Jackson, Hembree was first to tell the story of the river, lakes

(Editor's note: The book "Keowee: The story of the Keowee River valley in Upstate South Carolina" was published in 1995. It was written by Michael Hembree and the late Dot Jackson. Below is a remembrance of Jackson and working together on "Keowee," written by Hembree at Jackson's passing in 2016.)

Dot Jackson and I shared a love of the Carolina mountains.

It seemed only logical, then, that, over a breakfast of ham biscuits one day in 1994, we decided to write a book about them. We were writers, after all (the female half of us considerably more talented), and the mountains were there.

Reasons enough.

The book became "Keowee: The story of the Keowee River valley in Upstate South Carolina." The topic was close to each of us. Dot lived in the shadow of the mountains along the crown of South Carolina, and I loved the lakes and trails in the area.

Making the topic special, however, was the fact that the Keowee River, the focus of our writings, was no more. Once a sparkling wilderness river, the Keowee was flooded in the 1960s and 1970s by Duke Energy (then Duke Power) as part of a huge hydroelectric power project. The flooding created Lakes Keowee and Jocassee; lost was one of the Southeast's most enchanting backwoods rivers, along with the farm fields and modest homes of hundreds of residents.

Bridges, houses and even graves were moved before the mountain valleys were flooded. The Keowee River lives only in memories. But grand memories they are.

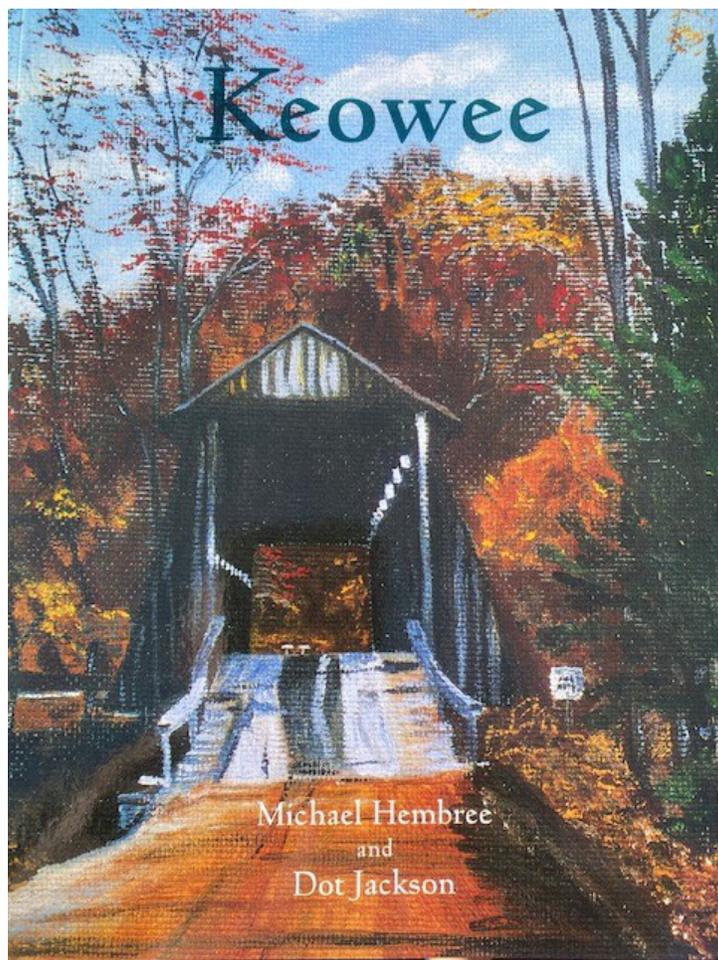
Dot took off in her tiny beaten-down car, interviewing dozens of people who had lived in the area before the lakes were built. Many had moved only a few miles away, having watched the playgrounds of their childhoods disappear under lake water.

Meanwhile, I was busy documenting the timeline of the Duke project and building a big file on the history of the Cherokee Indians in the area. We wrote different chapters in the book – it is almost impossible for two writers to work on the same computer at the same time, a process that would result in flying consonants and vowels, not to mention coffee.

Dot is one of the finest writers I've ever known, but the quality of the work that she brought out of the mountains over that period of months still startled me. Her revealing interviews with old-timers and her vivid descriptions of the mountains before and after the flooding jumped from the pages.

This was hearth and home for Dot, and it showed.

One short example:



Featured on the cover of "Keowee" is a painting of Chapman's Bridge by Jeanne Smith Nelson.

"In the memories of those who lived there, children are still playing under those trees, and the sparkling ripples of those waters are full of their laughter. Gardens still spill their riches over fences; cows fatten in meadowland pastures. There are throngs of summer boarders to be fed. Little boys ride on homemade 'truck wagons,' and the woodland paths are full of sly young sylphs and gigglers from Camp Jocassee for Girls. Someone making likker, someone unloading sin at the baptizing hole."

I had admired Dot's work since reading her columns in the Charlotte Observer. It was special to be a colleague of hers when we worked together at The Greenville News.

To share a book title with her was a highlight of my career. The book surprised us by selling out several printings, but the real reward for me was working on a project with a special writer and special person, one who made every sentence shine and every friend better. 🌿

("Keowee" can be ordered directly from author Michael Hembree for \$25 plus postage. Contact him at Mike Hembree, 182 Planters Drive, Gaffney, SC 29341, or call (864) 316-0386. The book is also available at Holly Springs Country Store at the intersection of US 178 and SC 11, in northern Pickens County. An excerpt from "Keowee" follows on Page 11.)

‘A Force of Nature’

Keowee River lives again in book

(Following is an excerpt from the Introduction to and Chapter One of “Keowee.”)

The Keowee River runs no longer, its swift current and placid pools lost in the power generation project that flooded the river basin and created Lakes Keowee and Jocassee.

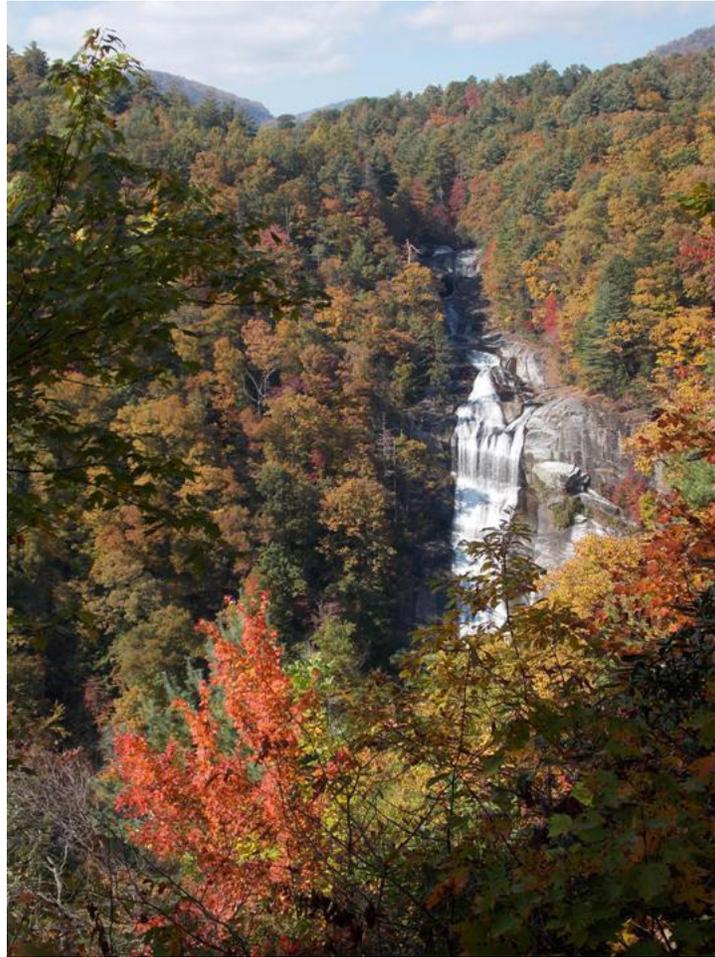
Gone also are the farms and fields, country lanes, swimming holes, churches, barns and homesteads that gave the river valley its human face.

Thousands who travel upcountry roads through the Keowee-Jocassee region know the area only as it exists today, a deep-water wonderland on the edge of the Southern Appalachians. For them, the Keowee River runs silent. For others, though, it lives—in the memory of a skipping stone or an autumn walk, or a day on the river fishing or navigating bateaux, the common boats of choice. They knew the land and the water before the lakes, and they miss the rich bottom lands and the abundance they provided, and neighbors who were “close” even though they often lived miles away.

The river lives again in the pages of this book. In photographs and words, we have attempted to tell the story of the Keowee valley in the years before and after the coming of the giant Keowee-Toxaway Project.

Within these pages are farmers and fishermen, preachers and engineers, storekeepers and dam builders. All—and more—touched the land.

We do not pretend that Keowee is a complete or definitive history of the Keowee basin. Time and space constraints produce limits that hinder. For a land so rich in history and heritage, there is much more to tell, many more voices to hear.



Lower Whitewater Falls is part of the story of the Keowee River valley chronicled in “Keowee,” originally published in 1995. (Photo by Heyward Douglass)

Chapter One: A Force of Nature

Born high in the front wave of the Blue Ridge Mountains, four swift, clear rivers flow south, pair up and merge as the eastern headstream of the Savannah. The bed of that union now lies 300 feet under Lake Jocassee. In another time, a river of great power and beauty was formed there, and its name was Keowee. Toxaway, Horsepasture, Thompson and Whitewater rise within a span of about 15 miles in Jackson and Transylvania counties above the North Carolina line. Fed by springs from laurel and hemlock-shaded slopes at elevations of 3,000 feet or more, they surge toward the Blue Ridge Escarpment and plunge in a set of the most dramatic free-falls in eastern America.

On the east, Toxaway River rushes from its early impoundment in Lake Toxaway and tumbles under US Highway 64 in a startling cascade toward the South Carolina line.

A few miles west, near Sapphire, Horsepasture River leaps southward in a series of spectacular falls. The tumultuous beauty of this gorge helped win the Horsepasture protection as a National Wild and Scenic River.

A mile or so below the South Carolina line, Horsepasture and Toxaway come together, albeit now as arms of Lake Jocassee. The river from here on was called Toxaway. Downstream, now also inundated, lies the vast amphitheater called the Horsepasture, a natural, cliff-rimmed corral where domestic livestock once grazed in the

place of the vanished buffalo.

In the high mountains about three aerial miles west of the falls of Horsepasture, Thompson River pools along on brief level ground, a serene haven for trout that tantalizingly fan the shaded water with their tails. Deceptive territory: not far beyond its bridge on what is now called the Upper Whitewater Road, quiet Thompson River slips over a ledge and falls about 300 feet, plummeting toward a union with Whitewater River and the deep mirror stillness in a valley far below. 🌿



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Hiking on Foothills Trail can be history lesson

By Odell Suttle

Hiking in the Northwestern South Carolina Mountains is a fun and enjoyable experience. However, it can be much more than that. It can be a learning experience. Learning the color of different trees, the venomous snakes that will kill you with one strike and the ones that will not harm you at all, berries that are as poisonous as those snakes are venomous.

Hiking something like the Foothills Trail will give you a history lesson you never learned in any school. Hiking the Foothills Trail over Hickory Nut Mountain, you can see the remnants of John L. Cantrell's home. I have been told it was one of the earliest homes in that particular area. I would like to know when it was built, if not the exact year then the era—early/late 1800s, early 1900s—any general idea would help.

Pushing away from Hickory Nut and turning south on F. Van Clayton Road and travelling a very short distance, there is an old cemetery. The tomb rocks are field stones and most are not marked. The people in those graves probably lived on Hickory Nut and/or Sassafras Mountain 200 years ago.

You cross trails that the infamous outlaw Major Redmond crossed while making his moonshine. I learned that I actually walked within a few yards of the very spot where Redmond had the famous shoot-out with a deputy sheriff.



Historical sites, like the campsite at the Old Cantrell Homesite, shown here in the fog, are abundant along the Foothills Trail. (Photo by Dustin Howie)

(Odell Suttle is a lifelong resident of Fountain Inn in Greenville County and a Viet Nam veteran. His wife, Sadie, is the person who got him interested in hiking back in 1986. Suttle says they both love South Carolina State Parks, especially Oconee and Table Rock.)