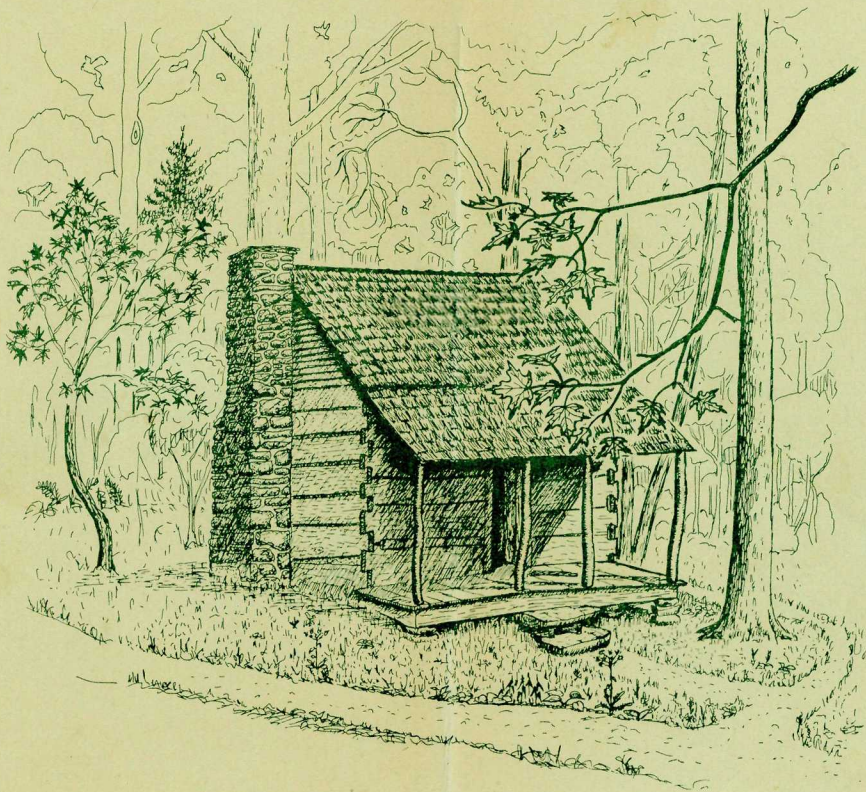


SUGARLANDS

SELF - GUIDING NATURE TRAIL



**GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS
NATIONAL PARK**

SUGARLANDS NATURE TRAIL


The features of this trail are those of a once-cultivated valley which has been reverting back to a forest cover of native species for about thirty years. The log cabin and other objects of pioneer mountain culture you will see are remnants of the "Forks of the River" farming community started about 1800 at this point where Fighting Creek flows into the West Prong of Little Pigeon River. When the land was acquired for the Park in the early 1930's, the settlement had 25 farmsteads, a church, a store, and a school. In the cemetery (not on this trail) we can see that the community during its century of existence included ancestors of many families living in Gatlinburg now — the Ogles, Trenthams, Maples, Bohanons, Whaleys, McCarters, Reagans, Carrs, Coles, Huskeys, Ownbys and several others.

The valley of the West Prong of the Little Pigeon River is known as the Sugarlands because of the abundance of sugar maple trees growing here. Maple sugar and syrup were made for sweetening in the isolated pioneer period of the 19th century. There are no large sugar maple trees left along the Sugarlands Trail. They were cut before the park was established for fields to grow their crops and also for high quality hard timbers.

The large variety of trees you find here are those that have spread back naturally over the fields abandoned when the national park was established. It will take many years for the new forest to attain the magnificent aspect it once had.

Here as in all national parks the natural and historical features must be left undisturbed for future generations to enjoy.

Please drop 10 cents in the coin slot in the box.

 **EASTERN WHITE PINE** (*Pinus strobus*) was the most valuable commercial species of tree in eastern United States before the great forests were reduced by lumbering. White pine of the park is susceptible to the white pine blister rust fungus which is controlled principally by the eradication of gooseberry plants which are necessary in the complete life cycle of the fungus. White pine is our only species with five needles per bundle. The whorled arrangement of branches is characteristic in young trees.



ASH-HOPPER BRANCH flows into Fighting Creek a few hundred feet down stream. The term ash-hopper refers to a common pioneer device which was used to leach lye from wood ashes. The lye was used in making soap and hominy.



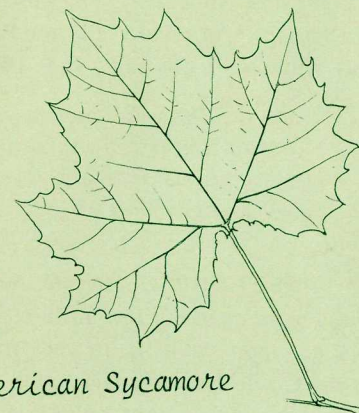
JAPANESE HONEYSUCKLE (*Lonicera japonica*) is a non-native vine introduced from Asia. As an escape from gardens it grows wild in eastern and mid-western United States. Unfortunately, in a favorable environment the otherwise attractive plant becomes an obnoxious weed by its habit of overwhelming and strangling the plants it climbs upon.



EASTERN RED CEDAR (*Juniperus virginiana*). The wood of the red cedar is quite resistant to decay both above and below ground and is extensively used for fence posts. It is not well adapted for growth in the deep shade and acid soil of local forests. Here it is a remnant of the former period of cultivated fields and will disappear when this forest matures. Pioneers prized it as an ornamental and planted it close to their homes.



The **AMERICAN SYCAMORE** (*Platanus occidentalis*) grows along streams and in wet land of low elevations. The upper trunk of the tree is left white as the outer bark peels off in thin sections.



American Sycamore



FIGHTING CREEK drains a section of the east slope of Sugarlands Ridge along highway 73 towards Fighting Creek Gap. It flows into the West Prong of Little Pigeon River near the Park Headquarters building.



ROSEBAY RHODODENDRON (*Rhododendron maximum*) often forms a dense forest cover along stream banks and shaded slopes to the highest elevations in the park. The handsome large leaves are evergreen and showy white flower clusters appear in June and July.

8

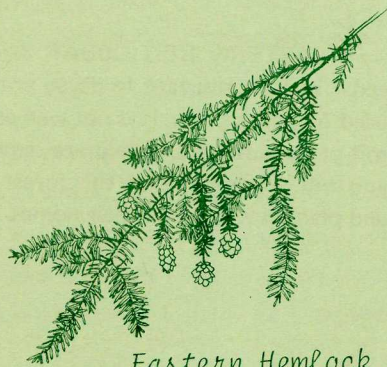
A CLEARING like this is reminiscent of the pre-park period when this land was being worked as a farm. The boxwood shrub by this post, the pile of chimney stones on the cabin site across the trail, black walnut trees, yucca, and other things you see here are surviving indications of a former house site.

9

CORALBERRY (*Symphoricarpus occidentalis*) bears purplish red "berries" that remain on the plant through the winter. It is a native species of the region, but in the park it is restricted to old homesites. The densely branched flexible shrubs were used as yard brooms by pioneer mountain people.

10

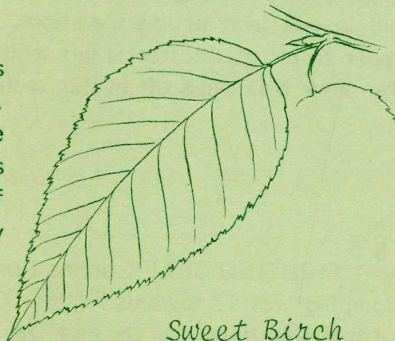
The EASTERN HEMLOCK (*Tsuga canadensis*) is one of our most attractive evergreen trees. The finest hemlock forests occur along streams and shaded slopes below 4000 feet. The largest eastern hemlock on record is in the Roaring Fork section of the park. It is 19½ feet in circumference.



Eastern Hemlock

11

SWEET BIRCH (*Betula lenta*) is found growing in our low altitude forests. The common name is derived from the fragrant oil-of-wintergreen odor of its inner bark. The golden yellow leaves of this tree are most attractive in our highly colored autumn forest scene.



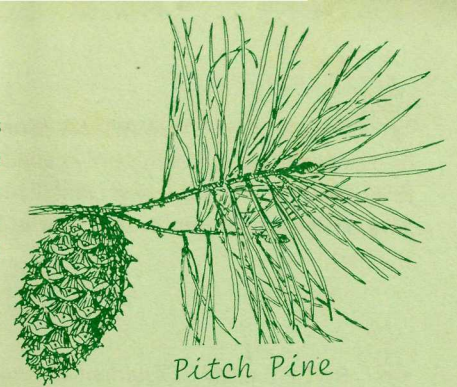
Sweet Birch

12

STONE FENCES were made by the people who settled here to make their living on small farms. Stones were removed from the fields so they could be cultivated, and were used in making fences along roads, fields, boundary lines, and sometimes as check dams to prevent erosion in fields.

13

PITCH PINE (*Pinus rigida*) grows rapidly in open woods. It is one of the common species of pine to quickly become established in old fields and cut-over hillsides. Its lumber usually is called southern pine.



Pitch Pine

14

EASTERN HOPHORNBEAM (*Ostrya virginiana*) and AMERICAN HORNBEAM (*Carpinus caroliniana*) are both commonly called ironwood. Here you can compare the eastern hophornbeam to the left of the numbered post and the American hornbeam on the right. The bark of the two species is probably their most conspicuous identifying character.

15

The JOHN OWNBY CABIN was one of 25 in the Forks of the River community before the park was established. It is used as an exhibit to preserve the cultural aspect of this valley, which has already progressed far towards returning to its original forested condition.

16

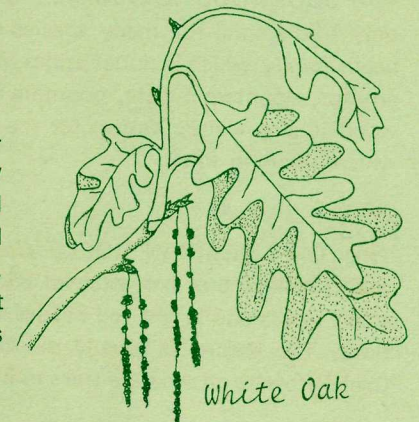
BLACK WALNUT (*Juglans nigra*) trees are found at nearly all housesites of the pioneer mountain people. It was undoubtedly planted near the cabin for its delicious and nourishing nuts, produced in great quantities almost every year.

17

COMMON PERSIMMON (*Diospyros virginiana*) belongs to the ebony family of plants, and its hard white wood is used in making small trinkets. The edible attractive fruit contains a large amount of tannin and is very astringent unless completely ripened.

18

WHITE OAK (*Quercus alba*) is perhaps the most valuable of the many species of oak and one of the most useful trees of the American forests. Its hard wood is valued for flooring, furniture, baskets, interior finishing and a great variety of uses where durable wood is needed.



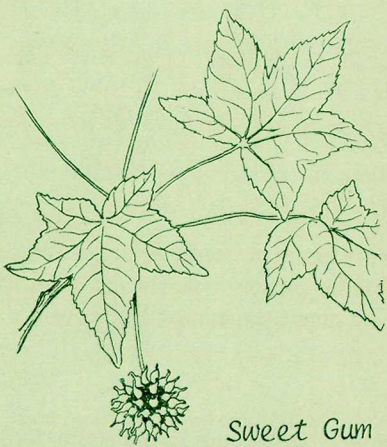
White Oak

19

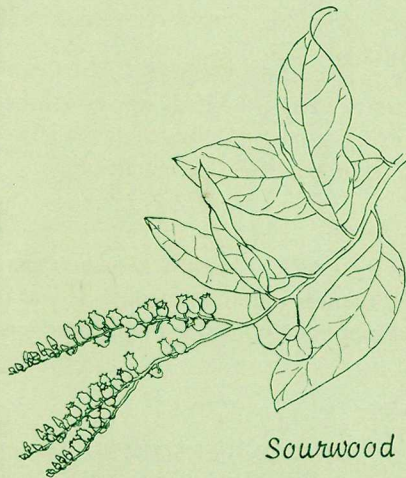
MOUNTAIN STEWARTIA (*Stewartia ovata*) is a member of the Camellia, or Tea family and is commonly called mountain-camellia. The small tree is widely known for its attractive camellia-like flowers which bloom in late June and July. It is an uncommon tree that is found only in some of the lower valleys in the park.

20

SWEET GUM (*Liquidambar styraciflua*). The red and gold autumn foliage and tall symmetrical form of the sweetgum make it a colorful species in the scenery of our lower valleys. Its star-shaped leaves and corky wings on twigs and small branches are characteristic of the species. In this low flat of Fighting Creek you find sweet gum as a common associate of species like American hornbeam, sycamore, paw paw, and others characteristic of such a streamside environment.



Sweet Gum



Sourwood

21

SOURWOOD (*Oxydendrum arboreum*) has the distinction of being the only tree among the many species of plants in the Smokies belonging to the heath family which includes azalea, mountain laurel, the rhododendrons, trailing arbutus, mountain myrtle, mountain tea, dog hobble, blueberry and others. Sourwood is also widely known for the excellent honey produced from its flowers which bloom in July.

22

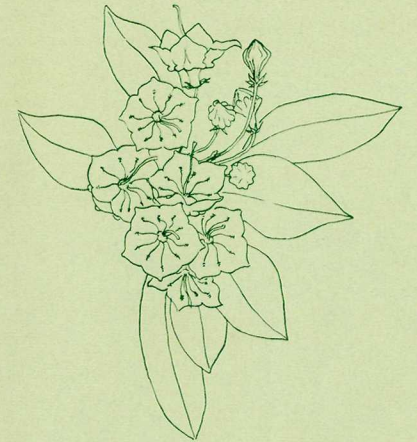
The **AMERICAN HOLLY** (*Ilex opaca*) is a beautiful tree of our low elevation valleys that has attained wide renown because its attractive glossy evergreen leaves and bright red berries have made it a favorite for Christmas decorations. The species is usually dioecious, with pistillate (female) and staminate (male) flowers on separate trees to insure cross-pollination.

23

MOUNTAIN VISTA. The highest and middle peak in the mountain group you can see from this point is Mt. Le Conte. On the left is Rocky Spur and to the right Balsam Point. Mt. Le Conte, elevation 6593 feet, is the third highest peak in the park. It is a challenge to hikers who find a rewarding experience from the fine panoramic views up there.

24

MOUNTAIN LAUREL (*Kalmia latifolia*) is one of our most beautiful and widely distributed shrubs. It grows at all elevations in the park; in exposed heath balds as well as along shaded stream sides. Mountain laurel blooms from early May through June.



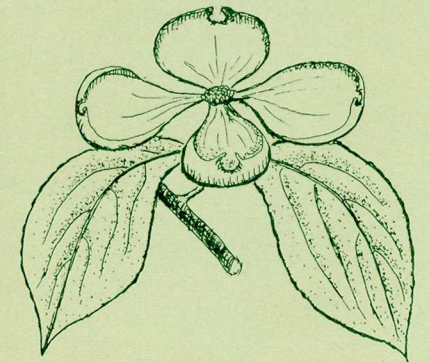
Mountain Laurel

25

CABIN SITE. The chimney stones and plum thicket at this location identify the site of a former pioneer home. Each homestead was located near cool spring water which provided them refrigeration as well as drink.

26

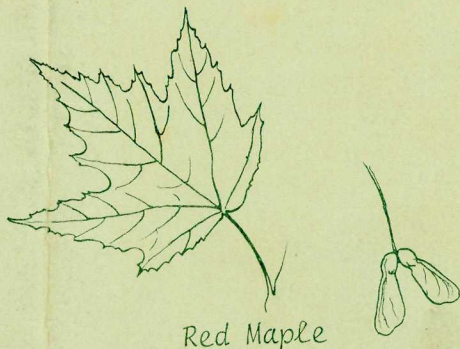
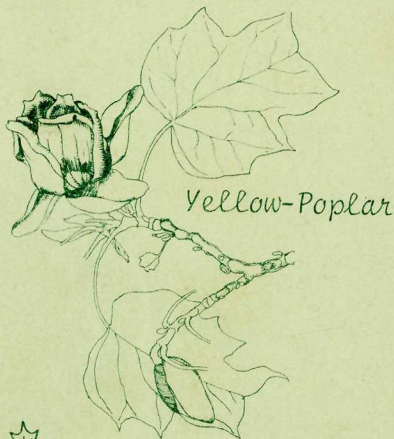
FLOWERING DOGWOOD (*Cornus florida*) occurs commonly in all open forests at low elevations and particularly along roadsides. It is one of the finest native ornamental flowering trees in the park. The blooming season for the flowering dogwood is April and May. The red foliage makes it most conspicuous in the autumn scene, and the bright red berries provide food for wild turkeys, thrushes, and other wildlife.



Flowering Dogwood

27

YELLOW-POPLAR (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) A 7½ feet in diameter specimen of yellow-poplar growing between Dunn Creek and Indian Camp Creek near Cosby is the largest living tree in this park. It is one of our most common trees, especially in the lower valleys. The wood was important to the pioneer for general building purposes when construction was with logs, and also later with sawed lumber. The tree is named for its tulip-like flower, which is the source of the yellow-poplar honey and is one of the common varieties of honey appearing on the local market.



28

RED MAPLE (*Acer rubrum*) is a hardy tree that grows to a large size at all elevations in this park under a wide variety of conditions of moisture and light. It is much inferior to the sugar maple for its wood and sugar. However, in the park the red maple is one of the most brilliant trees for the bright red it adds to the forest scenery both in spring with its flowers and winged seeds and in the autumn with its flaming foliage.

This is the last stop. You will return to the starting point by turning left at the trail junction a short distance ahead.

You can obtain information about other nature trails, historical mountain culture exhibits, and the program of interpretive talks and guided walks at the Sugarlands and Oconaluftee Visitor Centers.



July 1968

This leaflet is published by the Great Smoky Mountains Natural History Association, an educational society organized to assist the interpretive program of Great Smoky Mountains National Park with the approval of the United States Department of the Interior.