

# **David Hall Cabin and Charlie Monday – Dowser Extraordinaire!**

**(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on November 24, 2009)**

On Saturday, November 14, 2009, I was invited by Libby Bumgardner to come to an open house at the David Hall Cabin, built in 1799. This home of the legendary Revolutionary War soldier is being well preserved by loving hands and is a virtual showplace of the early history of our area.

The cabin is located in Claxton just east of the Tennessee Valley Authority's Bull Run Steam Plant and is on the route of the earliest road in this area, the Emery Road. This earliest road runs through Oak Ridge by way of the Emory Valley Road and a later addition to the road, the concrete and rock bridge just east of the Midtown Community Center. There is a historic marker near the bridge.

On this Saturday, I accepted Libby's kind invitation not knowing what to expect, but knowing I would be pleasantly surprised by what she had planned for the day. Libby and Harry Bumgardner have devoted an enormous amount of energy and attention to detail to make this uniquely historic group of cabins a memorable place to visit. Two additional cabins have been moved and reconstructed on the site of the original authentic David Hall cabin.

They have even added an "outhouse." As might be expected of Harry, the outhouse is not your usual outdoor pit toilet covered with a small wooden structure with a door and a plank seat with a hole in it. No, this "outhouse" is equipped with ALL the modern conveniences of an indoor bathroom.

The commode and sink are modern porcelain fixtures. The impact of seeing those unexpected items there makes one smile when they open the authentic (from the exterior) wooden outhouse door and amazingly get to use a modern flushing toilet bathroom with a modern sink and real soft toilet tissue.

But the most amazing thing Libby had arranged that day might well have been the visiting displays that had been set up in the yard of the historic set of cabins. One of the people putting on a display of their wares was David Dodd of Roane County who had several pieces of leather hides on display as well as some knives and other unusual items.

One of the items David had on display was called a "Swamp Bugger." This is a taxidermist's idea of a joke...it is the whitetail of a deer with a set of teeth, mouth and throat of a small animal molded into position to make the whole thing look exactly like what you would think a "swamp bugger" might look like.

However, the thing that caught and kept my attention for several hours was Charlie Monday, Dowser Extraordinaire. Amazing is all it can say about what Charlie showed me.

Now, I have known of the practice of "dowsing" or "divining" for underground water streams. I had heard of that all my life and had no doubt that there was something to it. I just had never had the opportunity to try it out myself, or to even see someone who was a practitioner actually do their thing.

Well, on this occasion I sure got to experience dowsing. When I arrived at the David Hall cabin, I first saw Charlie Monday as he had set up his table close to the parking area where foot traffic would come right by his table on their way to the cabins.

I stopped and Charlie immediately engaged me in conversation about dowsing. I admitted I knew little about it but thought there must be something to it. His reaction was gleeful as I am sure he knew he had found a kindred spirit.

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Charlie began by tossing a quarter on the ground and then showing me that by using a set of two metal wires (I later found out they were simply insulation keeping wires like one would use to hold fiberglass insulation up between rafters), he could easily locate the quarter. When he passed over the quarter the wires crossed. When he arrived exactly on top of the quarter, the wires were parallel in the opposite direction. He could look down between the wires at the location of the quarter.

He then took a forked willow stick and did the same thing. Charlie then asked me if I wanted to try my luck. I said, "Yes" and soon was holding the forked stick as he instructed me (palms up and stick horizontal). Nothing happened! I walked over that quarter a number of times and the stick just stayed where it was as dumb as could be.

Charlie then said, "Why don't you try the metal wires? I find that only a few people can dowse using forked sticks, however, a much larger percentage of the population can use the wires." I tried the wires by holding them loosely in my hands and balancing them out from me horizontally. Immediately upon moving over the quarter, the wires crossed, just as they had for Charlie.

I remember well the sensation of feeling those wires move involuntarily to cross above the quarter. Amazing is all I can say. I wondered aloud why witching for quarters worked and what did that have to do with dowsing for water. Charlie patiently explained it to me.

The wires can find any metal object as well as a stream of water beneath the ground. Okay, I decided to just accept it. I still don't see the connection. But I was to experience even more amazing things with the dowsing wires.

Charlie then pitched a penny on the ground about eight feet from the quarter. He proceeded to show me the wires could locate the penny as well as the quarter. Then he did the most unusual thing. He walked straight between the two coins and said aloud "Find the quarter, find the quarter" and son-of-a-gun, those two wires moved to point to the quarter.

He then repeated the same procedure for the penny – it worked the same. Finally he closed his eyes and walking between the two coins Charlie said, "Find them both, find them both" and those fool wires pointed in two directions one toward the quarter and one toward the penny.

Then he really took a leap of faith. He asked me to do the same thing. I did. It worked, I don't have a clue how, but it worked...and not just once but every time I attempted it. I wonder if I might have influenced the wires unconsciously.

Next Charlie told me they had found a stream of water nearby. Of course, I wanted to see the dowsing work on underground water, so I asked him to show me what he had found. The most amazing thing of the day happened then. Not only did he identify the stream, the width of it and the direction of flow, he determined the depth – 90 to 100 feet!

The method for determining the depth was to place a large metal nut (about the size of a lug nut for a car wheel) on a coat hanger and hold it in an arched manner over the water's location and grip it tightly. Within seconds, the nut started to swing the coat hanger up and down...getting to upwards of a 10-inch swing, and continued to oscillate up and down for exactly 100 times and then just stopped.

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Charlie then handed the rig to another person who held it over the water's location and lo and behold, the apparatus started again to oscillate up and down for exactly 100 times and then stopped. Now, that is amazing to me! Charlie claimed the water was at 90 – 100 feet underground. He says he has never missed on a well that has been drilled based on his dowsing. He has successfully dowsed six wells, all struck water within 10% of the depth he indicated.

Are you beginning to get the idea? Some amazing things being done here! Now for the even more unbelievable part...he dowses graves to find where people are buried in unmarked graves. He says this is a standard approach used by undertakers to assure they do not dig into an unmarked grave when burying someone.

Charlie says he can not only locate the graves (even infant graves) he can tell the exact dimensions of the grave and can tell whether the person buried there is a man or woman. That makes no sense to me.

Now, if you have already shaped two wires and are trying this yourself, and, if the wires are crossing over the coins for you, then try this. Check a table with the wires by moving them over it and assuring that they do not cross.

Then press your thumb into the table top to leave a thumbprint there and again move the wires over that spot...do they now cross over that spot? I find this most odd, but it works for me. Again, I believe I must be causing it. Maybe it is like the tendency to be hypnotized. Some folks are more readily influenced through suggestion to become hypnotized.

You can see Charlie Monday for yourself. He will be on Channel 8, WKXT TV, The Tennessee Traveler with Alan Williams on Monday, 11/23/09, during the six o'clock news.

Charlie will also be in Pigeon Forge, TN on

January 11, 2010, from 10:00 AM until 11:00 AM and from 2:00 PM until 3:00 PM,

January 12, 2010, from 10:00 AM until 11:09 AM,

January 14, 2010, from 11:00 AM - Noon.

All sessions will be in the Cello Room of the Convention Center next door to the Music Road Motel, Traffic Light 1, Henderson Road, Pigeon Forge.

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Swamp Bugger, made from a whitetail deer skin



Thelma Bumgardner demonstrates her skill at dowsing to the amazement of bystanders

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Charlie Monday calculates the depth of the water stream using a large bolt and a coat hanger



Historic David Hall cabin site