

## Underground Railroad Station Marked

by Marya Sluck

Over 3,000 refugees slaves escaped to the North on the Underground Railroad that passed through Guilford College in the years before the Civil War. Because it was an illegal organization, however, the Underground Railroad has been documented mostly by word-of-mouth tradition at New Garden Friends' Meeting.

Levi Coffin, a member of the Meeting in the 1820's, was president of the Underground Railroad. Janice McGuire, a descendant of Coffin's, said Coffin's house was on the grounds

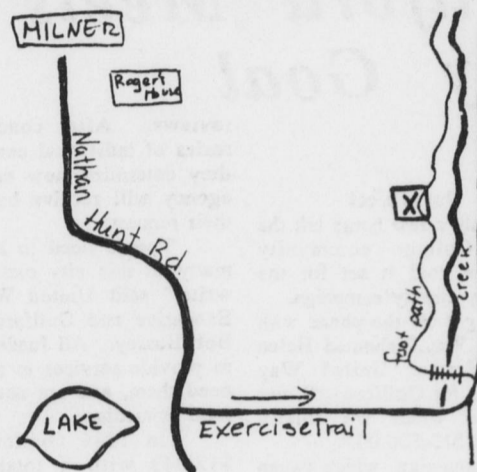
of the present day Jefferson-Pilot Country Club, about two miles north of Guilford College. Legend suggests that refugees hid in the woods between Guilford College and Coffin's home en route to the next "station."

The first station on the Railroad was in southwestern Guilford County near Randolph County line. Refugees would travel from station to station by following road markers, such as a nail in the tree, from North Carolina through Virginia to northern states and Canada. The Railroad's frequent destination was Newport, Indiana where many Carolina Quakers,

including Coffin, migrated to protest slavery in the South.

A former administrator and professor at Guilford College, the late Algie Newlin, wrote that refugees would hide in hollow trees or caves dug in the hill "around the second bend in the creek" by the present day exercise trail near the lake on Nathan Hunt Road. The refugees hid until they received an all-clear signal from Coffin or another "conductor." There are two sunken areas in the hill that hint the possibility of the legendary caves.

Others suggest that a wagon (cont'd. on pg. 6)



## Is Guilford's Tree Dying?

by Rich James

Is the Guilford tree dying? Could the mammoth Black Oak, whose fullness and majesty are embodied in the official school logo, be destined to become the Guilford College stump?

Contrary to rumor, Bill Scott, the director of groundskeeping, says the tree is not about to meet its fate, and is "likely to outlive us all." He says the tree's thin crown and tattered appearance are the products of natural and "man-made" stress.

"Like a person," says Scott, a tree cannot heal itself properly in a stressful environment. The thinning crown is due to "vascular damage" (damage to the nutrient transporting vessels in the branches) induced by natural stress. Natural stress is caused by sharp contrasts in environmental conditions. In recent history, this region has suffered extreme swings in climate; hot summers followed by very cold winters and moist seasons followed by droughts. This has slowed the healing of the tree.

Exacerbating this is the added man-made stress of walking and playing under the tree. The red clay soil compacts quickly and easily, closing air pockets, preventing the root system from absorbing nutrients and water needed for healing. "This is why we can't stress enough the use of sidewalks," says Scott. "The mindless making of dirt paths will kill plants faster than we

can save them."

To restore full health to the tree, the college is employing three methods of treatment. One is, simply, "judicious pruning."

More complicated is a process called "deep root feeding." Three times a year, the college feeds the tree a mixture of fertilizer and 300 gallons of water directly into the soil through a high pressure pump.

Scott says, "We are doubling the amount of water in order to help "break up the compaction of the soil." Fertilizer is added to help the roots grow and control disease.

The third procedure, which caught the attention of the college, was removing the grass from under the tree and replacing it with pine straw. This was done to eliminate the competition for nutrients

between the grass and the shallow roots of the tree. The straw blanket serves as a layer of insulation, maintaining constant temperature and moisture balance.

"I think we've rounded the bend," said Scott confidently. "We haven't seen the consistent loss of vigor that we've seen in the past." He expects the tree to return to full shape in ten years and he feels safe in saying the tree will "hang on another fifty years."

A tremendous amount of time, effort and energy has gone into nursing the tree over the last eight years which Scott asserts is "well worth it!" The towering oak has both scientific mythic significance.

In 1984, the tree was given the honor of "Champion Tall (cont'd. on pg. 6)



"Champion Tall Tree," 1984 -- largest black oak in N.C.

photo by Michael Hall

## History Lecture

by Jacob Stohler

On Tuesday, October 25, Guilford College sponsored a lecture in the Founders Hall Gallery entitled "Hitler and the Munich Crisis," with guest speaker Dr. Sally Marks.

The lecture was presented at 7:30 p.m. with over 60 people attending including Acting President Sam Schuman.

Dr. Marks, a history professor at Rhode Island College in Providence, has published such books as *The Illusion of Peace: International Relations in Europe, 1918-1933* and *Innocent Abroad: Belgium at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*. She has a master's degree in modern European history from UNC-CH and a doctorate in international history from the University of London.

This lecture was part of the 1988 Newlin History Lecture Series, named for the late Algie Newlin, a Guilford College History and Political Science professor from 1924-1966. Dr. Marks was asked to submit several possible topics for her lecture, and from them "Hitler and the Munich Crisis" was chosen.

Dr. Marks began her lecture by stating that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Munich Crisis, the event preceding World War II which, according to Dr. Marks, "made appeasement a dirty word." It was in Munich during 1938 that the Allied Forces agreed to Hitler's demands

and temporarily avoided war.

There was much resentment among both the people of Czechoslovakia and the U. S. State Department over this agreement because it was seen as a "caving in" to Hitler and his demands.

In point of fact, said Dr. Marks, there is a growing view now among historians that Munich was a necessary agreement. Not only did the delay buy a year of peace for Great Britain and France, but it also allowed Hitler needed momentum for his plan to conquer Europe.

Dr. Marks also explained in her lecture some of the rationale behind Hitler's plans, his intended methods, and his successes and failures. The Munich Crisis, she said, has continued to play a role in world politics even after World War II. For instance, she speculates, one of the reasons the United States remained so long in Vietnam was because supporters of the war compared a concession there with the situation in Munich.

Dr. Marks spoke for approximately 45 minutes with a brief question-and-answer session following.

One student who attended the lecture, freshman Paula Mullins, said she came because she has "always had an interest in the history of the World War II era," and was glad because it "proved to be very interesting."

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