

HISTORIC DISCOVERY IN DALE HOLLOW

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By Rebecca Franey

Fish were the only creatures to see the 160-year-old marker that divides the Tennessee and Kentucky border for years until it was discovered through a volunteer-based mission.



A surveyor, a fisherman and a diver found the hidden monument in early November, but volunteers had searched for it since 1990.

(Tony Waters prepares to dive next to the buoy marking the stone's location.

Charles Whittenburg

"What is really interesting about it is you think about the time when these were done. This was pre-dating the Civil War," Cookeville surveyor Charles Whittenburg said about the stone markers.

In 1859, the Cox and Peebles final survey marked the entire dividing border between Tennessee and Kentucky with large, engraved stones measuring about five feet long and eight inches wide, expanding to 10 inches wide at the bottom. Only one foot of the stone showed above ground, and the widening size kept it anchored in the ground.

The stones replaced the cut tree line method that indicated the border. A cut tree was a tree that a surveyor cut a symbol into the bark, usually with an axe, which remained as the tree grew. As people settled the land, they chopped down the trees for housing, so the markers disappeared.

The surveyors' task took about a year through the work of 43 men and cost \$47,987.07.

The search for the stone monuments that divide the Tennessee and Kentucky border began in 1990. The Joint State Line Committee, which was established to relocate the monuments for a data sheet, had found only five of the six markers in Pickett County by 1992.



Thirteen years later, committee members volunteered again to relocate the monuments to give a GPS coordinate to each. The committee contacted Whittenburg in 2009 and asked him to find the five monuments in Pickett County, but one was still missing.

A Pickett County resident and surveyor, Whittenburg agreed to help.

"Pro bono work is a part of being a professional surveyor. Volunteer work is regular. The nice thing was that there was no specific time that it had to be done," Whittenburg said.

Whittenburg searched for the monuments on the weekends and would find one or two every year.

In 2012, the committee assigned him five more to the west of Pickett County.

Whittenburg found the first one to the west of Pickett County this year.

Looking at the two monuments he already found, he noticed they were 13 miles apart. In 1858, the surveyors positioned a stone every five miles, if possible. The rough terrain caused an extra 3-mile gap because the Cox and Peeples surveyors did not want to position the monument in a place where no one could see it.

"They tried to set them by trailheads or popular roads," Whittenburg said. "Once they got to the river, they realized it would be a great place to put it because...[it was] where everyone was traveling at."

Whittenburg began his search for the missing marker five miles west of stone #47 and placed himself on Boys Island in Dale Hollow Lake, almost on the Pickett and Clay County line.

"I had this intuition that...someone knew where this stone was when the Pickett and Clay County line was established," Whittenburg said.

The original U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maps for the land acquisition of Dale Hollow Lake, which was created in 1943, clearly labeled stone #46 next to a popular trail.

Prior to 1990, surveyors could only use quad maps, which mapped elevations like mountain peaks and rivers, and there was no map archives easily accessible. In 1929, the quad map showed the stones' labels, but in 1959, the map revision removed them.

"Now we have the ability to pull up a map with stones and match it to a proximity of where a stone should be," Whittenburg said while clicking through multiple years of maps on an internet archive.

Digitizing the maps and orienting them to the two stones he found based on the marked terrain, Whittenburg was certain the missing monument was almost 30 feet underwater at what is known as Cook Pass, which was once a high traffic wagon road.

The creation of Dale Hollow Lake in the 1940s submerged the marker, where it's remained ever since.

Whittenburg enlisted the help of Mitch Robertson, local business owner and fisherman, who used his fish finder to scan for the stone marker.

Robertson found an object that was within 10 feet of Whittenburg's calculated GPS location. The two decided a diver would be the best way to verify the finding.

Tony Waters of the Putnam County Rescue Squad Dive Team used a GoPro to record the dive.

"I was excited to get the opportunity to help and hopefully find it," Waters said.

Within five minutes, he gave a thumbs up.

"I actually came upon this big stump and thought 'well the scan saw this stump and thought it was the stone.' So I swam over to the stump and four feet on the other side of it I saw the marker," Waters said.

The three had to go back to land and use a computer to watch the video.

"Once I played it, then I knew, without a doubt, it was it," Whittenburg said.

Next to the stone, the video showed the hollow stump of a witness tree, which a surveyor would have marked using the cut tree method to reference the stone.

About two feet of the stone shows above the lake's bottom due to erosion. The men plan to return to the site in the spring to clean the stone and photograph the engravings.

The monument should have TENN on the south face, KY on the north, 1858-9 No. 46 on the east, and miles from the starting point of the Mississippi River on the west.

The next time an addition is made to "Four Steps West," the book by James W. Sames III that documents the state boundary line creation and monument locations, it will include the location of stone #46.

The Dale Hollow Reservoir is a reservoir situated on the Kentucky/Tennessee border. The lake is formed by the damming of the Obey River, 7.3 miles above its juncture with the Cumberland River at river mile 380. Portions of the lake also cover the Wolf River.

*Read more about Putnam Co., TN & surrounding areas at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>