

## Carolina 1796, "...d'un nouveau Magnolia"

Charlie Williams

Early on the morning of April 3, 1796, a lone man eased into the saddle, grasped his mount's reins, and rode away from a familiar farm near Lincolnton, North Carolina. Leading his pack horse out on to the Tuckasegee Road toward the Catawba River ford of the same name, the solitary horseman would have attracted little attention that Sunday morning. He knew this stretch of road well, having traveled it in both directions several times before. The rider could not have known that this would be his last visit with this friendly farmer and his last view of this familiar landscape. As was his custom, the man on horseback later made notes about where he had lodged for the night. He included details of his route, estimated distances from place to place, and most important of all, described the unusual plants he had observed and collected. The traveler had been in the saddle for many miles, and his packhorse bore the heavy burden of his books and collections of plants. Not a man given to outward displays of emotion, he nonetheless must have smiled in the knowledge of what lay only a few miles ahead. This day would be a special one because he was returning to the site of a rare new species of magnolia he had discovered earlier. Now the season was right to collect live plants of this new magnolia, a tangible prize of this long and difficult journey. One of the great discoveries of his illustrious career lay only a few miles closer to the Tuckasegee Ford.

Today you will find a historical marker where the rider passed by the Lincoln County Courthouse on his journeys, for the man on horseback was André Michaux, the celebrated French botanist-explorer of the eighteenth century. Even this modest marker in the shadow of the Lincoln Courthouse is unusual for there are few traditional memorials to this man. While the name "Michaux" is emblazoned upon few monuments, it is found on literally hundreds of plants that he either named or were named in his honor.

Michaux's host on that April day in 1796 was a prosperous farmer who had shared his lodgings and his table with the French botanist

several times before. Christian Reinhardt and his wife are remembered in local history for attending to the wounded after the battle of Ramsour's Mill. The deadly Revolutionary War engagement had pitted family members, friends and neighbors with opposing sympathies against one another. After the outnumbered patriots triumphed, Reinhardt's nearby house became a makeshift hospital and homemade bandages of Reinhardt bed linens wrapped the wounds of the casualties of both sides. A few months later, Lord Cornwallis and his army of British redcoats briefly occupied the Reinhardt farm. Cornwallis commandeered the house as his headquarters and this incident gave rise to other long-remembered stories of Christian Reinhardt and his plucky wife. Barbara Reinhardt is said to have complained personally to the general that his soldiers were stealing her chickens. However, there are no Reinhardt stories of the traveling botanist, André Michaux.

Christian Reinhardt's home no longer stands, but Lincolnton is a thriving small city, rich in history, less than an hour's drive from the sprawling metropolis of Charlotte, North Carolina. Among the half-million citizens of Charlotte today there are only a few named Reinhardt. It was a happy coincidence, therefore, that one of the Reinhardt family would live six doors down the street from this researcher. Finding the name in André Michaux's journal, I asked my neighbor Philecta Reinhardt if she knew anything about this eighteenth century Christian Reinhardt of Lincolnton. She certainly did know her own ancestor, and after a brief lesson in family history, directed me to her distant cousin, Charlotte attorney Edgar Love III. Through his mother the late Elizabeth Reinhardt Love, Edgar is a descendant of several eighteenth century settlers of old Lincoln County. Two of these pioneer settlers, Christian Reinhardt and Peter Smith, are mentioned by André Michaux in the journal he kept of his travels in America. Michaux mentioned only four names from this small area between Charlotte and Lincolnton which then had a population in the hundreds.

Edgar Love III is a keeper of family history. In the early 1970's, his parents acquired the house that his ancestor, Peter Smith's eldest son David, built about 1824 near Lincolnton. Edgar Love III conducted the research and prepared the home's application for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. In this detailed research report on the structure and the surrounding grounds, he noted that the name of the fine old house, "Magnolia Grove," came from the grove of *Magnolia macrophylla* trees on the grounds. His ancestor David Smith had transplanted these trees to his new house from his father Peter's farm nearby. In an account dating from the

early days of this home, North Carolina's leading nineteenth century botanist, Moses Ashley Curtis, noted these trees growing at David Smith's and remarked upon their rarity.

Of course, in the winter and spring of 1995 when Dr. Bill Logan and I conceived the idea of a program on André Michaux and the *M. macrophylla* for the Mecklenburg Treasure Tree Committee, we knew none of this fascinating history. Our aim was to promote awareness of the urban forest through the recognition of treasure trees. In the Treasure Tree Program size is the most important single quality. Because the *M. macrophylla* possesses the largest simple leaves and largest flowers of any tree native to temperate North America, the tree fit in neatly with the Treasure Tree Program's visible goal to recognize the largest tree of each species in Mecklenburg County. We were familiar with the state champion *M. macrophylla* that was one of our Treasure Trees. Although battered by Hurricane Hugo, this proud resident of a Charlotte park had nonetheless remained the largest of the species reported in North Carolina. Neither of us had ever seen *M. macrophylla* in the wild. We knew the story of its discovery was somewhat mysterious because the sources we had examined separately didn't agree. Bill Logan had read that André Michaux had discovered the species near Charlotte in 1789. In contrast, I had read the biography of Michaux that indicated discovery in Tennessee in 1795. There was really no inkling of the adventure ahead in reconciling these contradictory reports and rediscovering the forgotten locations where André Michaux first encountered these remarkable trees in the Carolina Piedmont.

#### André Michaux Botanist of France

Although André Michaux left a detailed handwritten record of his travels in America in his native French which was transcribed and published a century ago, the complete journals are not available in English. While some parts of the journals have been translated into English, over half of the text is available only in French. Since I do not read French, this could have been a serious impediment to research. However, this shortcoming was erased when my friend Suzanne Barber, drawing upon her experience as a translator in her native Canada, crafted an invaluable working English translation of the journals for the years 1787-1789. If this story can have a heroine, it must be Suzanne Barber for her quiet toil with Michaux's journals of quaint eighteenth century French, phonetic English and botanical Latin. Her careful translations of key passages provided the first crucial clues needed to unravel the mystery of where and

when André Michaux initially encountered the tree he ultimately named *Magnolia macrophylla*.

In the last three decades the threads of the Michaux story have been woven together for the general reader in two books: *Lost Heritage*, 1970, and *André and François André Michaux*, 1987. Both books were written by the team of Henry Savage, Jr. and Elizabeth Savage of Camden, South Carolina. Using the journals as their primary source, the Savages allowed the André Michaux story to unfold chronologically.

The story that emerges is the tale of an intrepid and dedicated man of science. In an age when travelers were routinely subject to hardships and dangers almost incomprehensible to us today, Michaux thrived on journeys of exploration. His extraordinary ability to overcome hardship and rise above difficulty made him a formidable explorer. Natural ability, and the best training and preparation in the world made him a keen scientific observer and successful plantsman.

Michaux's destiny was to explore and botanize eastern North America. With a zeal that would be admired in any place or time, he explored virtually the entire American continent east of the Mississippi River. He paddled Florida swamps, climbed Carolina mountains, trod Canadian tundra and braved the many and varied perils of the American wilderness traveling thousands of miles in search of new plants. Sometimes with others, more often alone or accompanied only by local native guides, he carried on this search for the new and different in the plant world for eleven years. Supported at first by the French government, he continued the work with his personal resources when the French Revolution ended his government funding. He was a dedicated man, motivated not by a desire for riches, but the love of his work and a desire for recognition. Most of all, Michaux hoped to be able to continue his work with plants.

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Only by the thinnest of margins was he deprived of an opportunity to explore the Missouri River Valley and beyond for Thomas Jefferson. His thirst to explore new territory and find new plants was never quenched. Eventually it led to his untimely death on the island of Madagascar.

When this freshly appointed Botanist of King Louis XVI in America arrived in New York in 1785, the ink was barely dry on the Treaty of Paris ending the American Revolutionary War. The French kingdom was eager to expand upon the friendly links established with America during the war. Michaux the scientist was also a representative of the French government. Within a few months of his arrival on our shores he visited Philadelphia to pay a call on France's favorite American, Benjamin Franklin, and other notables in the young nation's largest city and intellectual center. Continuing the journey southward, the botanist-diplomat carried plants, seeds and official greetings to America's "first farmer," George Washington. Enjoying the pleasures of his plantation at Mount Vernon after the rigors of leadership in the Revolutionary War, Washington recorded the meeting in his diary.

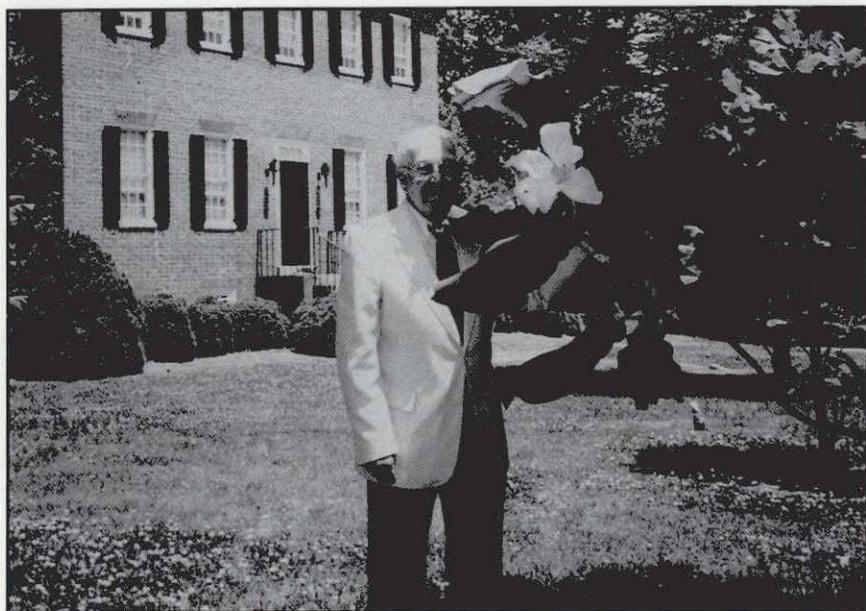
One of the men of science that Michaux met in Philadelphia was William Bartram. Not many years past, Bartram had made the epic journey into the wilderness of the southeastern United States that inspired him to write the now classic *Travels Through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida* which would be published in 1791. Sources indicate that it was Bartram who told Michaux of the abundance of new plants in the verdant southern Appalachian Mountains. Whether persuaded by Bartram or not, we soon find the Frenchman enduring many hardships exploring these wild mountains from his new base in Charleston, South Carolina. On his first expeditions in 1787 and 1788 to Carolina's high mountains, Michaux traveled west through South Carolina and Georgia, approaching the Blue Ridge mountains from the south. In the region where North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia meet today, but was then part of the lands of the Cherokee, he encountered a new magnolia. This tree had been described to him by Bartram, and we know it today as *Magnolia fraseri*. Bartram knew this magnolia by other names, and we observe Michaux fumbling for what name to use in one of these first encounters. In quick succession the French scientist refers to the plant as *Magnolia montana*, *Magnolia auriculata* and *Magnolia cordata*, sowing enough confusion about the magnolia he had seen to prompt Harvard's Charles Sprague Sargent to write a scholarly paper interpreting the magnolia references in this passage. Michaux seems to have

been quite interested in magnolias. The journal indicates that earlier, while in the coastal plain, Michaux had already encountered the closely related small tree we know today as *Magnolia fraseri* var. *pyramidata*. He was also familiar with other eastern North American members of the Magnoliaceae from his European scientific training. The *Magnolia grandiflora*, *Magnolia acuminata*, *Magnolia tripetala* and *Magnolia virginiana* (then known as *Magnolia glauca*) were grown and prized in European gardens in Michaux's time and he mentions all of these trees. Europe lacked any native magnolias and the North American trees were regarded as among the best of the New World's horticultural offerings.

In the spring of 1789 André Michaux, accompanied by his nineteen-year old son François André, set out from Charleston for the high mountains of western North Carolina by a different route. This time he went north through central South Carolina, followed roads to the east of the Wateree-Catawba River system and entered North Carolina near the village of Charlotte. Crossing the Catawba River a few miles west of Charlotte he followed a well-worn road through the villages of Lincolnton and Morganton on to the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina farther west. He followed this route again on subsequent journeys, although he sometimes bypassed Charlotte. Notably, in 1795, on his longest western expedition to the Mississippi River, he would pass west of Charlotte and enter North Carolina at the present site of the Daniel Stowe Botanical Gardens in Gaston County. On each journey, however, Michaux passed through the locale that is now Stanley, a small town that has grown up halfway between the old Tuckasegee Ford on the Catawba River and Lincolnton.

On the first section of this westward journey between the Catawba River and Lincolnton in the vicinity of present-day Stanley an unusual magnolia caught his attention. In this first entry in the journal he referred to this plant as a *Magnolia cordata* describing it as unlike the *Magnolia cordata* discovered previously and commenting on the color of the leaves and their undersurface. In locating this find he simply gave the distance from Charlotte, estimating it to be 18 miles.

Even today there is some confusion about the name *Magnolia cordata*. In the posthumously published *Flora Boreali-Americana* Michaux, or his scientific and literary executors, would assign the binomial *Magnolia cordata* to the yellow-flowered variety of *Magnolia acuminata* (*M. acuminata* var. *subcordata*). The *Flora* also mentions no Carolina range for *Magnolia macrophylla*. Nonetheless, this encounter near Charlotte on June 10, 1789, was the



Edgar "Cap" Love holding a *M. macrophylla* flower with his home, "magnolia Grove" in the background.



*Magnolia macrophylla* over *Kalmia latifolia*, Stanley, North Carolina.

French scientist's first brush with *Magnolia macrophylla*. Nineteen-year old François André Michaux accompanied his father on this journey. Years later, the younger Michaux recounted the details of the discovery in his *North American Sylva*. His account confirms that the tree observed on June 10 was *M. macrophylla*.

The elder Michaux actually recorded four other encounters with this species in this narrow geographic area between the Catawba River and the town of Lincolnton. However, it cannot be determined without careful study that *M. macrophylla* is the tree being described because he has not named the plant, not even provisionally, at this time. Moreover, if André Michaux collected specimens for his herbarium from this area, they are either lost or are unmarked. We do know that André Michaux's herbarium was damaged when he was shipwrecked on the Dutch coast during the return journey to France in 1796. He was employed for six weeks painstakingly remounting his specimens on fresh herbarium sheets. It is also possible that Michaux simply did not observe the tree in bloom in North Carolina, and he would have been more interested in collecting specimens with flowers. François André assures us that further searches for this tree east of the mountains were unsuccessful. Whatever the reason may be, the only specimen sheet in his father's herbarium in Paris today that bears a geographic notation is marked "Bord des creeks, Willderness de l'Etat de Cumberland." In June 1795 while crossing the Cumberland region in eastern Tennessee, André Michaux found this tree in flower and did collect for his herbarium. A note in his journal describing the flower "*Magnolia petalis basi purpureis*" records the event. Scholars point out that the type specimen, which is important in botanical history, was collected in Tennessee. However, Michaux first encountered the tree, and eventually collected living plants for his garden in Charleston at forgotten stations in the North Carolina Piedmont.

#### Discovering *M. macrophylla* Along Michaux's Route Today

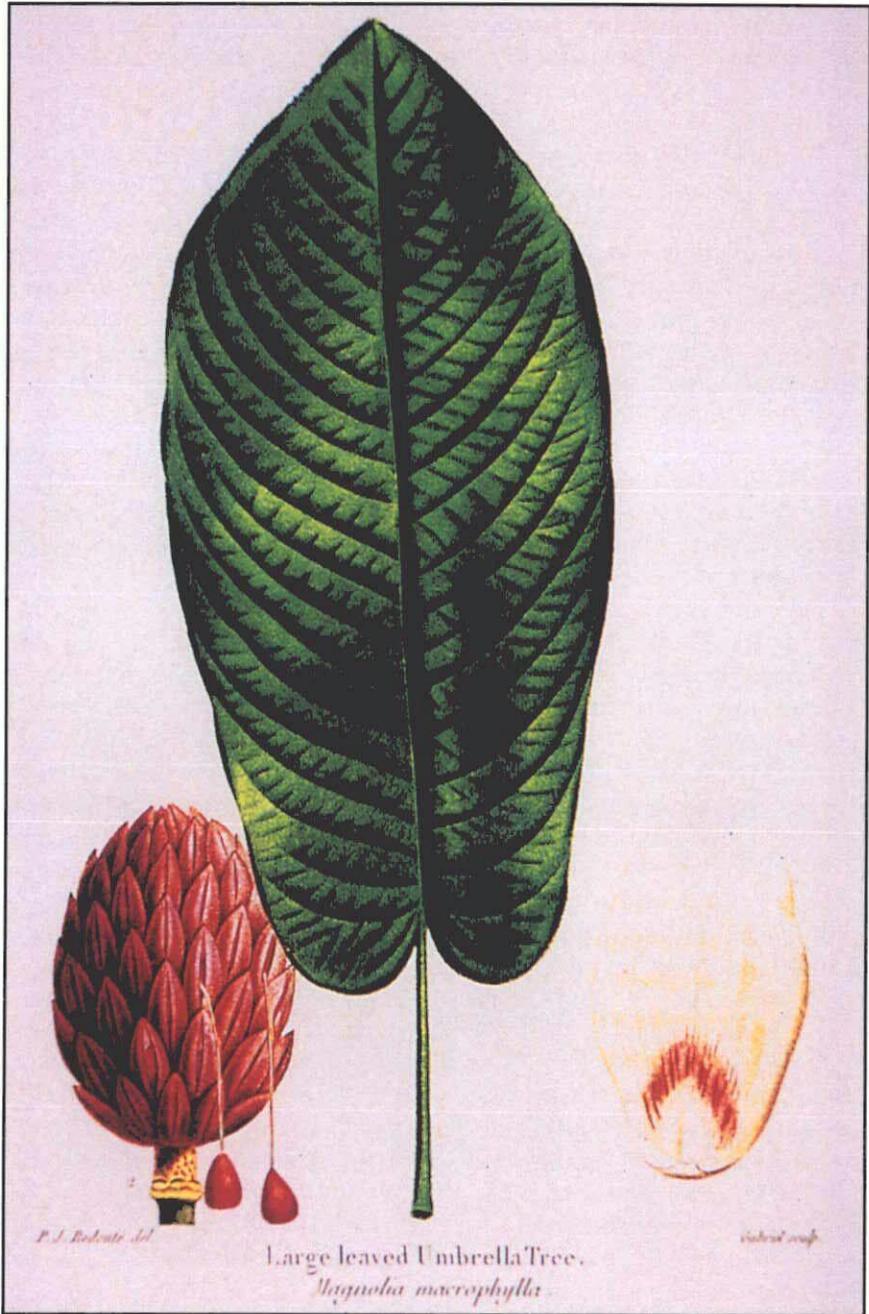
*Magnolia macrophylla* is a rare plant in North Carolina. As of November 1995, the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program, which maintains a list of rare plant sites, had records of eleven stations in the whole state. Only two of these were near the route traveled by André Michaux two centuries ago, and neither location seemed to fit the geographic descriptions in Michaux's journals. With the assistance and encouragement of UNC-Charlotte botanists Dr. James Matthews and Dr. Larry Mellichamp, this researcher submitted reports on eleven more stations for this species in or near the town of Stanley to the North Carolina Natural Heritage Pro-

gram. This small town lies astride the route followed by Michaux as he journeyed between the Tuckasegee Ford on the Catawba River and the village of Lincolnton two centuries ago and is surrounded on all sides by *M. macrophylla* stations.

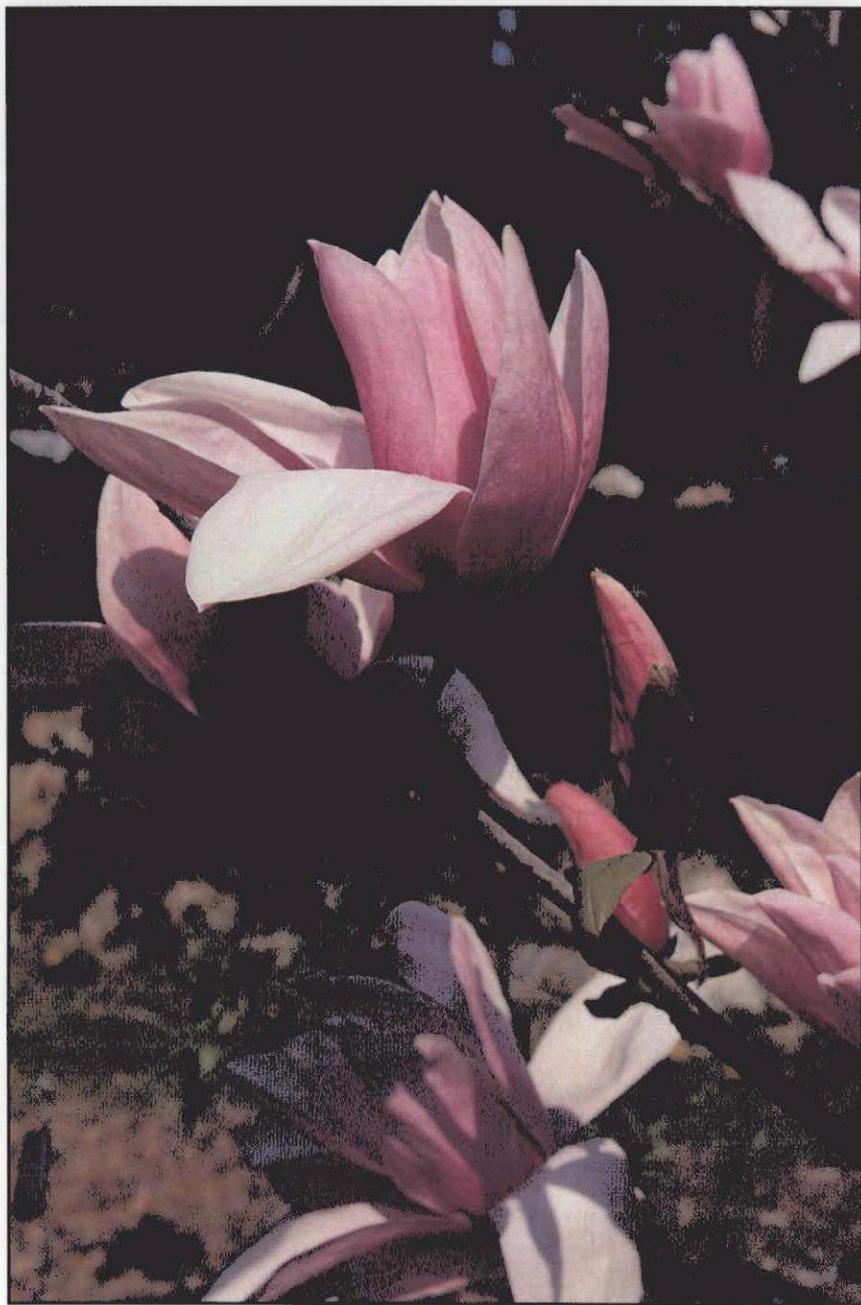
André Michaux traveled this route either five or six times between 1789 and 1796. Some pages from the journal are lost so we cannot absolutely say six, but it almost certainly was six. He mentions a magnolia in this small area on each of the five trips for which the journal has survived. Careful study of the journal, cross-referencing his landmarks and distances suggests that it is likely he found two separate populations of *M. macrophylla* two to three miles apart along his route through the vicinity of present day Stanley. According to Michaux's mileage estimates, the first three journal entries are 18 miles west of Charlotte and two or three miles east of the homes of pioneer settlers Peter Smith and Bennet Smith. The last two entries of the five from this area are from the farm of Bennet Smith, 20 miles west of Charlotte and a mile or less west of Peter Smith's.

All three of the earliest entries are from a site that would today be within the environs of the town. The precise location of the old roadbed Michaux would have followed in this area is not known. What can be verified is that *M. macrophylla* is found today along several small tributary streams within the one to two mile distance from Peter Smith's in the likely path of the old road. The ground these trees inhabit today is rough and steep and the populations are narrowly confined along these tributary streams. Arriving in the locale occupied by Stanley today, Michaux would have passed through a belt where these magnolias grew. The botanist repeatedly observed and documented the tree and made note of its companion plants as he passed through this area.

The best description from the three earliest journeys was written in Latin on November 16, 1789. The trees still had some leaves, but also had winter buds and there were dried fruiting cones in the leaf litter. In what Linnaeus called a diagnostic description, stating only the essential characteristics of the plant, Michaux describes the tree as having leaves that are the longest, glaucous, cordate, with spherical fruit and the buds at the end of the branchlets are described as sharp-pointed and covered with silky white. In the next sentence in French he goes on to mention that the tree is "less tall" than the known species of magnolia. Visits to sites in Stanley in November 1995 verified many leaves remaining on *M. macrophylla* this late in the season as well as well-formed winter buds and dried fruiting cones on the ground.



P. J. Redouté's illustration of *Magnolia macrophylla* from  
The North American Sylva of André Michaux, 1819.



*Magnolia x soulangiana 'Lombardy Rose' at Chollipo.*

### Locating the 1796 Collection Site

The main thrust of Treasure Tree's Michaux Bicentennial Program was to relocate the site of Michaux's collection and description on April 3, 1796. This was the first time that he proclaimed in his journal that *Magnolia macrophylla* was a new species of magnolia. Michaux did not give the tree its name at this point, but he wrote a full description including a description of the flowers which would not have been present so early in April. The collection site was just west of Stanley on or near the farm of Bennet Smith. When André Michaux rode away from Christian Reinhardt's farm for the last time on April 3, 1796, his destination was Bennet Smith's only twelve miles distant. The indication that he made this short journey in order to collect *M. macrophylla*, and not just to visit with his old acquaintance, comes from another journal entry.

There is an enigmatic reference to "a...magnolia" at Bennet Smith's as he passes by this man's farm April 28, 1795, on the outbound leg of his long western exploration to the Mississippi River. Since he returns to this very site and collects live *M. macrophylla* plants for his garden the next year, this is the magnolia Michaux means at Bennet Smith's farm.

Within six weeks after passing by Bennet Smith's in April 1795 the botanist would observe *M. macrophylla* in bloom in Tennessee. Although he could collect and dry flowering specimens for his herbarium from the Tennessee site, he could not collect live plant material and keep it alive during the arduous frontier journey that lay ahead. Michaux's mission was to collect live plants to send to France. His opportunity to collect live plant material came the following April when he returned to Bennet Smith's farm in the Carolina Piedmont.

The Tennessee entry: "magnolia with purple at the base of the petals" is revealing for all its brevity. This event must have been electrifying to a man who had only seen smaller magnolia blossoms of a single color. Magnolias were already special to Europeans and now he has a fragrant magnolia with purple on the petals. As my friend Bill Logan so dramatically described this Tennessee encounter when presenting the Treasure Tree slide program: "one can imagine a happy and excited Michaux making a mental note to collect some living specimens from those extensive populations he has seen at Bennet Smith's near Charlotte."

The historical record indicates that Bennet Smith lived near the confluence of Hoyle Creek and Little Hoyle Creek. The boundary trees of eighteenth century deed descriptions have fallen or were cut long ago, but the name of this creek remains the same. Little Hoyle

Creek is mentioned in the deed description of an addition to a Benjamin Smith's farm in 1790. There was only one Bennet Smith in this county for the first Census of the United States in 1790. His name appears as Benjamin on legal documents and church records, but it is the same man André Michaux knew as Bennet. The census has no Benjamin Smith. Bennet was a nickname for Benjamin in this era. The next generation also had a "Bennett Smith" whose given name was Benjamin Franklin Smith.

While the precise boundaries of Bennet Smith's farm remain a mystery to us today, there are indications that the farm either came very near or perhaps included a magnolia site we now find along the small tributary of Hoyle Creek just south of its confluence with Little Hoyle Creek. Five deeds executed between 1790 and 1833 naming either Benjamin Smith, Peter Smith or John Moore as buyers or sellers help clarify the history without actually defining the boundaries of the land. As we have seen, Michaux was visiting Bennet Smith on April 3, 1796, when he wrote the most comprehensive description of the *M. macrophylla* found in his journal and described collecting the plant for his Charleston garden. Michaux subsequently introduced the tree into cultivation in Europe, presumably using plants from this collection.

Word of Michaux's discovery spread quickly through the international horticultural community of the day. A new magnolia was an important find. Within a few years another plant hunter sought out his *M. macrophylla* collecting sites. This collector, the Scotsman John Lyon, lately gardener to William Hamilton of Philadelphia, was a nurseryman entrepreneur. For him plants were green treasure, the means to gain financial freedom from his employer. Hamilton was said to have the finest garden in the original thirteen states, but a reputation as a difficult taskmaster.

Perhaps best known as the last man to report observing the "lost *Franklinia*," *Franklinia alatamaha* of Bartram in the wild, John Lyon dug and sold great quantities of wild plants for profit. We are fortunate he also kept a detailed journal of his activities. In the first of what would eventually total five visits, Lyon sought out André Michaux's North Carolina collecting site for *M. macrophylla* in 1803. Lyon identified the site as the farm of Peter Smith near Lincolnton. This is the same Peter Smith that Michaux visited in 1789, a close neighbor of Bennet Smith. Lyon went on to either employ Peter Smith or form a partnership with this farmer to gather and probably also to grow *M. macrophylla* from seed. The scholar who transcribed Lyon's journal, Dr. Joseph Ewan, suggests that Peter Smith's was one of the plant collector's holding gardens and a

number of plants for Lyon's nursery trade were grown at Peter Smith's. Some of Lyon's customer lists from his London sales survive and they make interesting reading. Kew Gardens bought plants from Lyon, as did Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society. One wonders if they bought *M. macrophylla* and if the plants survived.

Nonetheless, we have already seen that André Michaux had named Bennet Smith's farm as his magnolia site in 1796. Now, only eight years later, Lyon says it is Peter Smith's. The key to understanding this apparent conflict came with examination of the old Peter Smith deeds. In the handwritten script of an eighteenth century clerk of court lay the simple explanation. Bennet Smith sold his lands to Peter Smith in 1797 and moved out of the county. It was an enormously exciting moment to see these two names from the era of André Michaux linked by a land sale which both unraveled the mystery and confirmed the geography. Since Peter Smith apparently acquired all of Bennet Smith's lands he acquired his magnolias as well. Michaux's magnolias in 1796 on Bennet Smith's place would have been Lyon's magnolias on Peter Smith's place in 1803. It was the same tract of land. The ownership had simply changed.

The report of another early botanist provides a vital clue to the other puzzle in this mystery. Could the *M. macrophylla* site we find on the little tributary of Hoyle Creek today be the station visited by André Michaux and John Lyon? North Carolina's most prominent nineteenth century botanist was Moses Ashley Curtis. For a brief time in 1835 the newly married Curtis lived in Lincolnton. He reported *M. macrophylla* to be a rare plant east of the Allegheny Mountains and noted it growing in three places along the road between Lincolnton and the Tuckasegee Ford. The first of these was Edgar Love III's ancestor David Smith's home, Magnolia Grove, six miles from Lincolnton. The trees at Magnolia Grove are known to have been transplanted from Peter Smith's. Edgar Love III thinks that his ancestor may have used this grove of unusual trees as a form of advertisement for his bed and breakfast establishment. In the early days Smith offered lodgings for travelers at Magnolia Grove. The room where President James K. Polk spent the night is still known as the Polk room. A nearby competitor for the trade of travelers boasted a mineral springs; perhaps the resourceful David Smith countered with rare flowering trees to make his lodgings unique. The last of Curtis' sites was probably also a grove of transplanted trees. This was Huntersville on the outskirts of the present town of Mount Holly and the childhood home of Curtis's

botanist friend Dr. Cyrus Hunter. Huntersville and its trees are but a faint memory; the house is gone as are the magnolias Curtis observed. However, Curtis' middle location along the Tuckasegee Ford Road was the Moore Mine. The site of this long-abandoned mine is less than one-half mile south of the little tributary of Hoyle Creek whose steep slopes harbor an extensive wild population of *M. macrophylla* today.

Geography and the trail of old deeds suggests that this site on the little tributary of Hoyle Creek is the most likely site for Michaux and Lyon. We add to this paper trail of old deeds the knowledge within the present generation of the Moore family about the location of the road from Tuckasegee Ford to Lincolnton. This old road crossed the Moore property and traces of it can be found today. The original Moore home, occupied continuously from the 1750's until the 1960's, was once a stagecoach stop on this old Tuckasegee Road. For seven generations the Moore family has owned land in this locale. The original land grant document, bearing the signature of a Royal Governor of North Carolina, is now in the possession of Frank Moore who lives on the old homeplace. In recent decades, Frank's cousins Jack C. Moore and Mike Moore have acquired old Moore lands along Hoyle Creek and Little Hoyle Creek including the Moore Mine site. Early in this research, through the good offices of volunteers at Stanley's Brevard Station Museum, I became acquainted with Jack C. Moore and we have walked his woods along Hoyle Creek together many times. Our very first walk was especially memorable; he led the way into deep woods near the Moore Mine site. We were walking single file along a deer trail and I was admiring the large beech trees when it suddenly registered that the tree with whitish bark down the slope was not smooth enough to be a beech. Then I saw the big leaves and it just took my breath away.

#### Description of the Hoyle Creek Site

One of the new stations for *Magnolia macrophylla* reported to the N.C. Natural Heritage Program is this site on Jack C. Moore's land that is most likely André Michaux's 1796 collecting site. This is the wild population of *M. macrophylla* nearest the Moore Mine site and the old road. A small spring-fed tributary flows west emptying into Hoyle Creek a few hundred feet from where this stream is joined by Little Hoyle Creek. The town of Stanley is less than two miles east and growing in all directions as Gaston County becomes more urban. The nameless little stream flows sluggishly at the bottom of its small ravine at an elevation of 660 feet. To the north is a hill whose rounded summit reaches 800 feet. Both the crest and the

slopes of this rise are covered by old hardwoods. To the south is a somewhat lower hill whose highest elevation of 760 feet is crowned by a sizable rock outcrop that remains hidden because of the taller trees. *M. macrophylla* claims the steep slopes along the winding ravine between these hills for its entire length of over a quarter mile. The magnolias favor the steepest places where the slope faces to the north. This long, narrow *M. macrophylla* population does not stray beyond these sheltering hills. Aging ironwoods (*Carpinus caroliniana*), their trunks displaying the muscular look of this species, share the perpetually moist bottom of the ravine with the occasional buckeye (*Aesculus sylvatica*). The magnolias seem to prefer slightly better drained soil, occupying the steepest places on the slopes in competition with other hardwoods which shelter them as well as share the sun's rays. Prominent among these canopy species are the beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), red and white oaks (*Quercus rubra*, *Quercus alba*), hickory (*Carya tomentosa*), and tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). *Magnolia macrophylla* shares the understory with flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*), sourwood (*Oxydendron arboreum*), American holly (*Ilex opaca*) and young scions of the canopy species. The slopes of the higher hill to the north also include mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) in the shrub layer and silverbell (*Halesia caroliniana*) in the understory. In springtime, wildflowers including trillium (*Trillium catesbi*), hepatica (*Hepatica americana*), foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), and pennywort (*Obolaria virginica*), briefly hold the stage before they are shaded by the trees leafing out. Summer guests also encounter ferns, poison ivy and hungry mosquitoes. Visiting this site in the spring of 1996, Dr. Larry Mellichamp was delighted with his unexpected find of an edible mushroom. He collected a morel (*Morchella*), too large to enclose in a half-gallon ziploc bag.

Most of the magnolias are small understory trees, but there are a few which have grown tall. A team from the Treasure Tree Committee has measured two of the tallest trees in search of a new state champion. One twin-trunk specimen measured 68 feet tall and another majestic magnolia with a straight single trunk reached 56 feet. This single trunk specimen is 11 inches in diameter 4 feet off the ground and each of the trunks of the taller twin-trunk tree is over 9 inches in diameter at the same height. Casual observation, however, suggests few of the *M. macrophylla* trees in the Stanley area reach 40 feet.

Shared occupation with taller hardwoods of a steep north-facing slope with a small stream at the bottom is the virtual common

denominator of *M. macrophylla* sites in the Stanley area. These sites are small, rough parcels of land unsuitable for agriculture. Over the years they have doubtless been visited occasionally by loggers, but the timber-cutting practices of the past seem to have left these small plant communities intact. On the Hoyle Creek site and other sites west of Stanley, *M. macrophylla* is the only magnolia we have encountered. However, *Magnolia tripetala* is also found with *M. macrophylla* in two stations east of Stanley where little streams draining into Stanley Creek provide suitable habitat. The site on the small tributary of Hoyle Creek and nearby sites on the tributary streams of Mauney Creek hold the greatest interest for the story of André Michaux's discovery of this beautiful flowering tree, but all the sites where this tree grows are special places. The tree with its giant leaves makes them so. To some it may be the tropical look these trees give the forest, but it is more than that. Standing in the deep ravine of one of these little spring-fed tributary streams and looking upward at the steep slopes and forest canopy high above is to experience, if only briefly, the feel of an old forest. The stillness, the forest odors, the deep shade, the animal tracks in the mud beside the clear water, everything tells your senses that you are in a place still wild.

#### Conclusion

The Treasure Tree Committee has presented the slide program we developed from this research project several times to audiences as varied as the Stanley Town Council and the founders of the Daniel Stowe Botanical Gardens in Belmont, North Carolina. People who appreciate plants or history enjoy the story and we have raised awareness of the tree and the special regional historical links. The Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden plans to name a nature trail after André Michaux. Above this trail is a north-facing slope. Perhaps in the future visitors to this magnificent new garden will enjoy a planting of these native magnolias with their giant leaves and blossoms in the same region where André Michaux first described the tree two centuries ago. ❧

MARJORY GOSSLER  
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