

# Treestory – Spencer's House

by Jim Cortese, TIPCO, Inc.

Thomas Sharp Spencer was an adventurer, hunter, Indian fighter, land speculator and an associate of Daniel Boone. He was one of the pioneer long hunters and a man of gigantic stature, strength, and courage. Some records say he weighed more than three hundred pounds.

Spencer was at a gathering of long hunters back in Virginia. One of them, who thought Spencer had insulted him in some way, slapped him. Spencer turned, grabbed the fellow, lifted him, and threw him over a nearby fence. The thrown fellow, after recovering, went to the fence and said, "Mr. Spencer, will you please throw my mule over the fence, so I can go home." Indians, finding his huge footprints in the woods, endowed him with the nickname of "Bigfoot" which remained with him all of his days.

He migrated over the mountains and explored through the wilderness to the Cumberland country with a hunting party in 1776. This Cumberland country is just northeast of present-day Nashville, Tennessee. He was so attracted by the richness of the soil and the plentiful game that when his companions returned home over the Allegheny mountains to Virginia after a two-year stay, he decided to remain in what was then Indian Territory.

His best friend and companion named Holliday decided to leave the wilderness. Holliday had lost his hunting knife and feared to make the journey home without it. Spencer broke his own knife in two and gave him half of it. He then accompanied Holliday part of the way up into Kentucky before returning alone to live at the site they had left, the only white man in all the vast Cumberland area.

It was then that Thomas Sharp Spencer took up his residence in a huge hollow sycamore tree, close by the sulfur spring which later became known as Bledsoe's Lick, and still later as Castilian Springs. The site of this old sycamore is today marked by a tablet erected by the James Robertson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. It is claimed that the tree was more than nine feet in diameter.

Spencer spent much of his time during the long cold winter in his tree home, locating several choice tracts of land in the area. Ultimately, he learned that he was entitled to and could only keep one tract under the law. Thus, he selected out of the four parcels of land that he had previously located, the rich tract of 800 acres near Gallatin, Tennessee, in Summer County. This place has been known since that day as Spencer's Choice.

The sycamore tree perished many years ago, but as long as it stood, it was called by the settlers, "Spencer's House."

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