

## Turpentine Trees

Another feature that makes the SWA 1187 such a rarity is a small section of pine trees with catface scars from the turpentine industry long ago (Fig. 1). Here is an excerpt from the South Carolina Forest Commission in *A Short History of the Forest Industry in South Carolina* available at <http://www.state.sc.us/forest/scindust.htm>:

By the 1700s, coastal pinelands became major producers of naval stores, products derived from the pitch of southern yellow pines. Turpentine was produced by distilling the pitch or “gum” from living pine trees. Workers would cut V-shaped galleries into the side of a pine tree and place a reservoir at the point of the V to collect the sap as it flowed from the wounds (Fig. 2).

Early reservoirs were simply hollows carved into the base of the tree. These were called “chop boxes”. Chop boxes gave way to clay collection cups during the second decade of the 1900s, and these were in turn replaced by tin cups.

In South Carolina, turpentine trees were worked from March through October or November. One V-cut was added each week during the season, creating a chevron effect or “face” on the side of the tree. Old stumps and sometimes even living trees can still be found with the characteristic turpentine scars. The collection cups were emptied of gum every three weeks. Barrels of crude gum were then hauled to a turpentine distillery (“still”) to be rendered into turpentine and various by-products.

The turpentine industry moved out of South Carolina in the 1940s. A few lightwood stumps are still harvested to extract various chemicals.



Figure 3-1. Catface scars from the turpentine industry



Figure 3-2. Workers collecting the sap. Source: Florida State Archives