

Excerpt from the novel, *The Dusty Trail*, Ray Hazel, 2015

...Reaching the base of this old oak my Uncle looked around at the ground and paced off 6 long paces and he stopped. He started kicking leaves and dirt about three inches deep and with some relief and happiness obvious on his face, he asked me to help him kick away the dirt and leaves. While helping Uncle I was shocked to find a flat stone approximately four foot square. He took his gloves and started brushing off the remaining dirt and leaves. I helped and soon the explanation for this effort appeared and I sat down in amazement. My Uncle continued cleaning and even used his old sweatshirt to help give me a better look. There were thirteen names engraved in this stone ranging from my Grandmother and Grandfather followed by all the names of my Uncles and Aunts in the order they had been born with just one exception. Between my Dad's name and his younger sister was the name *Raymond*. Reaching down he wiped that name cleaner and started explaining about his nephew who passed away at the age of three from a deadly flu virus. He had asked my Dad and Mom to name me Raymond in honor of that child and they had agreed with his suggestion. Then he wiped off another area and I could see that he had chiseled the image of several doves flying toward this old oak tree...