

Giant Sycamore Trees of State Described and History Outlined

By OLIVE INEZ DOWNING.

A TREE that was termed the Sequola of Indiana, several years ago, was the Worthington Monarch, an old sycamore that was supposed to be the world's largest broad leaf tree. It stood in the White river bottom one and one-half miles east of Worthington, Ind.

In its zenith of growth it won the prize as the oldest deciduous tree in the United States. It also had the distinction of being more than 500 years old—in height it was 130 feet and measured 45 feet in circumference at the base. At about the space upward of 15 feet on its trunk, two limbs branched into huge proportions and later there appeared a cavity from one side of the base to the other. At that time, it was possible for a man to walk through it but every step was taken to preserve its life for it had already wrestled with time and storm that had left their imprints.



Worthington monarch sycamore at its zenith of growth.

Tells of Markers.

This giant tree stood on the farm of Mrs. Electa Dixon—she was the grandmother of Frank Hoagland of Swayzee, who supplied the picture of the old sycamore at its best. He knew all about the old monarch as it stood on his childhood romping ground and as a boy he played many days beneath its shade. He stated that in the flood of 1875 a spike from the railroad ties was placed on the old tree trunk as a marker of the water's height; in 1913 another marker was placed, the waters exceeding the other flood by two feet. In 1915 the old tree measured 43 feet and 3 inches in circumference, at five feet above the ground.

Mr. Haddon, Worthington photographer, took a picture of the great sycamore to the Panama Exposition in California in 1914-15, so its honor has been given in song, story and picture.

Today all that remains of the Worthington monarch is the immense limb that is set in cement, covered with a roof and taped at the bottom for its protection. It now stands in Worthington.

Present at Setting.

Leo Turhune, the custodian of the grounds, was present when the limb was set in its location. Noble Short brought it into the city in a truck and unloaded it by team.

Many initials had been carved on the limb's surface and Mr. Turhune feared this had caused more decay in places. A fence was placed so there would be no molestation from curious boys and girls.

At the tree's old standing ground, Terhune said that he had walked through the body many times and had been with groups that had partaken of picnic dinners within its cavity. In plowing around the old base today, roots from the old giant are still found out to a distance of 25 to

largest tree of the hard wood species, was the object of much speculation and finally it was felled and hauled from its vantage place, and its massive trunk conveyed to the city park where it was placed, covered and steps taken for its preservation. The rings were counted and it was found to be more than 700 years old.

Other Trees Measured.

Estimates of measurements of other trees were taken all over the state—the Brandywine sycamore, at one time was supposed to be the largest tree of its kind in America and even the Worthington tree was re-measured and found to be 52 feet in circumference while the Kokomo tree out-rivalled it then by five feet or more. There were so many disputes concerning the enormity of the tree patriarchs that three cities in particular were seeking honors for their trees. It is sufficient to say that all mentioned were of colossal size.

Of the present day sycamores, there is one with a historical setting on the Ell Lilly farm, four miles south of Noblesville; it measures 27½ feet in circumference and is supposed to be the largest of its kind reported today in all of the surrounding country. The historic old sycamore that could tell years of the life at the Conner homestead and no doubt years and years previous to that period—stands as a sentinel on the large prairie farm; it still guards and quietly helps to preserve the tree lore of the old place. It leans as though weary of its burden of years, but it pos-

sesses a history very worthy of recording.

At Traders Point, where Road 52 crosses Eagle creek, is an old sycamore that is unusual and a marvel to those who view its beauty. It is on the Albert J. Beveridge Jr. estate and Mr. Schoolcraft, representing the Davey Tree Company, estimates its age as over 300 years. It is five feet through and grows next to the bank, leaning over the river at an angle of 45 degrees. People who see the tree are always thrilled by its outstanding appearance.

Another large sycamore stands near Broad Ripple, across the road west of the Union Chapel cemetery—on the farm of John Haverstick. It measures 22 feet 3 inches in circumference and remains quite large in trunk formation even to high proportions, some limbs being as large as an ordinary sycamore tree. Two trees grew up near it, helping to support it through the years, but they are now gone—just the stumps remain to corroborate their story.

It is close to White river, almost close enough to have the old tree's roots. True to its sycamore kin, it leans characteristically and impressively.

When the first burial was made in Union Chapel cemetery the forest trees were so dense that men were forced to blaze a trail to reach the burial ground. This old sycamore was among those marked and today bears the imprint of the scar. So it, too, as all the trees mentioned, has been a marker and chronicler of time and historical incidents.

← LOOK FAMILIAR?

(From the Triples)

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