

(No. 12)

Trees  
New York

# HISTORICAL TREES

OF THE

## STATE OF NEW YORK



The New York State  
College of Forestry  
Syracuse University

1923

LIBRARY  
NEW YORK  
BOTANICAL  
GARDEN

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## FOREWORD

THE historical tree contest was held during the summer of 1922 by the New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse University. The results sought were the gathering of educational data and the effect that such a contest would have in arousing public interest in trees. Interest in one tree leads to the development of knowledge and interest in many trees and eventually to sympathy with the great national need of forest conservation about which there is a deplorable lack of information on the part of the public. Adherents of forest conservation are won gradually and are made up of persons whose support is inspired through various sources; historical trees is one source.

Through this picture competition the college has been able to gather information never before correlated and at the same time to call the attention of participants and thousands who have followed the progress of the contest through the news to the vital importance of a more judicious use of our rapidly vanishing forests.

The contest was decided by judges who had no acquaintance with the competitors and who by professional training were eminently qualified to pass judgment on the pictures submitted. The judges were: Dr. P. W. Wicks, formerly Supervisor of History, Syracuse Public Schools, Chairman; Dr. William P. Baker, Editor of the Syracuse Post Standard, and Dr. Edwin P. Tanner of the History Department of Syracuse University. Dr. Tanner explains the points considered in awarding the prizes:

"In making the awards the judges held in mind factors which they believed to be inherent in the nature of the contest. While they were impressed by the relative importance of the events or scenes with which the trees were connected, they nevertheless felt that the relation of the tree to the famous incidents, the manner in which it itself embodied the history, was an element of great weight. Mere propinquity to important ground or the fact that the tree had possibly 'witnessed' historic scenes, tho entitled to consideration, did not appeal as decisive factors.

"It was also necessary to consider the historic data submitted by the contestants to establish the authenticity



of claims advanced for the trees. For this reason assertions based on local tradition or inherent probability had to be discounted. Any evidence of a nature such as to satisfy careful scrutiny was held to be essential.

"Providing that the photograph or other illustration was reasonably clear not much emphasis was put on the mere character of the picture. But when two or more contestants submitted pictures of the same tree the award was made on the basis of the artistic merits of the illustrations. This compelled the judges to make one or two difficult decisions from the aesthetic point of view.

"It was also decided that awards should be given to duplicate pictures only in case really meritorious reproductions of other trees were lacking.

"Trees outside of this Commonwealth were ruled out. The judges were greatly impressed by the results of the contest in calling attention to and arousing interest in the historic trees of the Empire State. It seemed to them that further investigation could easily establish still further interesting evidence of the value of trees as historic monuments."



**F**ORESTS are indispensable to National prosperity. On account of the time element involved in growing forests, prompt and vigorous action today is needed if the Empire State fifty years hence is to have the forest area necessary for the development and maintenance of its industries and the health and happiness of the people. The interest and support of every forward looking citizen is needed in order to get a proper forest program established. Some love trees for their beauty, others for their associations. To many the love of certain single trees or communities of trees which we call forests is instinctive. Whatever the attachment, this booklet should increase the esteem and reverence in which these kings of the field are held.

"Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a Tree."

## THE SCYTHE TREE



*Submitted by Alva H. Pulver, Sodus, N. Y.*

THE tree is on the farm of Clarence Schaeffer, Seneca County. In 1861, when he learned Fort Sumter had been fired on, James Wyburn Johnson, of Waterloo, came from the field bringing his scythe. He placed it in a small Balm of Gilead tree near the house, with the remark, "Leave the scythe in the tree until I return." He enlisted in the union service.

The parents of young Johnson for a time heard from their boy and then a silence came, extending from month to month. The war records show that the young man was mortally wounded in North Carolina, dying in a hospital there, and was buried in the South in 1864. In the years of the war the scythe was left where it was placed in the tree. The six-inch sapling grew about the blade of the scythe. It finally held the scythe securely and the inroads of elements loosened the handle which dropped away. At the present time only about six inches of the blade protrudes from the side of the tree. In the photo this may be seen on the right side of the tree. Won \$10.



## SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON'S BLACK WALNUT TREE



*Submitted by Mrs. Frederick R. Greene, Market Hill, Amsterdam*

THE tree was planted by Sir William Johnson the distinguished Commissioner of Indian Affairs nearly 175 years ago. Here he was made commandant of the militia of the Mohawk Valley and took command of more than eleven hundred Indian braves, among whom was the venerable King Hendrick, and led them to the battle and ultimate victory of Lake George.

Here in 1759 he received Brigadier-General Prideaux with the troops, regulars, and provincials, together with the Mohawk Indians who were to make the memorable and victorious attack on Fort Niagara. Before the battle began General Prideaux was killed and Sir William following the plans prepared under the tree, assumed command and won the battle. The tree is located near Fort Johnson, Johnstown. Won \$5.

## THE WITENAGEMOT OAK TREE



*Submitted by F. H. Jackson, Manufacturers National Bank, Troy*

THE Board of Indian Commissioners headed by Governor Andros and his councillors, judges, and divines, accompanied by the militia of the King of England, assembled near the confluence of the Tomhannac with the Hoosac and planted at Schaghticoke, Rensselaer County, the Witenagemot Oak. The famous Council Tree of Peace was planted, not only with a view of confirming the link of friendship between Kryn's "Praying Mohawks" of the Caughnawaga village in Canada and Soquon's Hoosacs, but to strengthen the alliance of the Fort Albany militia with their river Indian scouts, whose fugitive kindred were scattered throughout New England, New York, and New France. It is the only "Vale of Peace" on the continent where the Witenagemot (Assemblage of the Wise) ever assembled for the Indian's welfare. Won \$5.



## THE COUNCIL ELM TREE



*Submitted by Kenneth Dovey, 31 Whitmore Ave., Johnstown*

UNDER this tree Governor Tryon, Sir William Johnson, Joseph Brant and the Mohawk Indians of Lower Castle met in conference July 28, 1772. The speech of Brant on this occasion has been called the masterpiece of Indian oratory.

Important conferences between the Iroquois and Sir William which led to the opening of the Ohio Territory for white settlement, were held under this elm where Cornplanter suggested that Fort Pitt be abolished, to which Sir William agreed and runners were sent to this frontier fort with the announcement. The tree stands in the Johnstown cemetery. Won \$5.

## THE WASHINGTON SYCAMORE



*Submitted by Mrs. J. T. Lockwood, 36 S. Broadway, White Plains*

**T**HIS magnificent Sycamore stands close beside the Washington Headquarters at White Plains. It is identified with the Father of our Country, with great statesmen, great soldiers and preachers. It has witnessed the passing of a retreating army and later the return of a successful one. It shaded the windows of the room occupied by General Washington when the Battle of White Plains was fought, October 28, 1776, and again during the summer of 1778.

Under its branches many distinguished men have passed, General Alexander Hamilton, Governor George Clinton, The Count de Rochambeau, General LaFayette, Duke de Lauzun, James Monroe, Generals Israel Putnam, Aaron Burr, Charles Lee, and others famous in the Revolutionary history of our country. Then in later years, according to tradition, Frances Asbury preached in its shade. Won \$5.



## FORT STANWIX SAPLING



*Submitted by Charles M. Omart, Rome*

THIS tree was spoken of by historians as a sapling in 1804 and stood in Fort Stanwix. A fort erected by the English Government in 1758 and taken possession of by the American troops in 1776 and from which the first American flag was flown August 6, 1776. Also in this fort the treaty was signed between the Iroquois Indians and the United States by which they signed a vast portion of their lands in the West to the U. S. in 1788.

This fort stood at a point which is now at the corner of Spring and E. Dominick Street in the city of Rome, N. Y. Won \$2.

## THE COUNCIL **E**LM



*Submitted by Margaret S. Tennent, Caledonia*

**W**HEN an Indian village flourished on the site of Caledonia this tree was said to have been the meeting place of the Iroquois. Many prisoners of war were executed near this tree. This was on the main trail between Albany and Niagara Falls. The Indian peace prophet and apostle of temperance Gan-e-o-di-ya was born in the nearby village and often sat at the councils under this tree. A boulder commemorating the spot has been erected by the chapter of G. A. R. and the Improved Order of Red Men. A descendant of the famous peace prophet, Mr. Arthur Parker of Albany, took part in the exercises and a poem was written on the old council tree. Won \$2.



## THE FIRST LOCUST



*Submitted by Mrs. Marion P. Makay, Sea Cliff*

THE locust tree in the picture is said to be the first ancestor of locust trees in New York State. It stands on the grounds of Isaac R. Coles at Glen Cove, Long Island, and is healthy and strong, measuring more than twelve feet in circumference. It was planted in 1680 by Captain John Sands, for whom Sand's Point, N. Y. was named. Captain Sands brought it as a seedling from Virginia and it was given to a relative then living at the Coles homestead. During the Revolution the smaller trees which grew from this first one were cut down for posts by the Revolutionary soldiers so that the big tree stands alone in that section, and may be regarded as the one which was the progenitor of all locust trees on Long Island and throughout the State. Won \$2.

## SMITHFIELD PRESBYTERIAN OAK



*Submitted by Samuel S. Ferris, Philmont*

**T**HE Rev. George Whitfield preached under this oak Sunday, June 18, 1770. The services were to be held in the Smithfield Church which stands just opposite the tree but the church was too small to accommodate the congregation so he delivered his sermon in the inviting shade of this nearby oak.

On the 150th anniversary, exercises were held and a plate attached to the tree commemorating this historical occasion. Won \$2.



## GENERAL LAFAYETTE TREE



*Submitted by Maria L. Andrews, 972 Harvard St., Rochester*

**T**HIS tree shades the spot where June 8, 1825, General LaFayette was welcomed by the children, militia and citizens of Geneva, N. Y. A tablet has been erected at base of the tree by the Seneca Chapter, D. A. R. Won \$2.

NOTE — A second Scythe tree picture was awarded a \$2 prize submitted by Walter A. Phillips, Rochester.

## HONORABLE MENTION

### THE TREE IN FIVE PLACES



*By Howard Van Wie, Martville*

A wild cherry located in Oswego and Cayuga Counties and in three townships, Hannibal, Sterling and Victory. It has been owned by four men at the same time.

### WHITE OAK OF WHITE PLAINS



*By Geo. Lowerree, 107 Central Ave., White Plains*

The Giant White Oak named in the purchase of White Plains from the Indians in 1693. Campsite of Revolutionary soldiers and passed many times by George Washington on his way to his headquarters, 1776-78. It marked the boundary line between White Plains and North Castle.

### THE TWELVE APOSTLES



*By Otto Olmberger, 270 50th St., Brooklyn*

The Twelve Apostles Silver Beech trees, corner of 74th Street and Ridge Boulevard, Brooklyn. The trees bear dates cut in them 1710 and 1722, and it is said they were a guide to ships when they came around the point from what is now Coney Island.

### OLD SCHAGHTICOKE OAK



*By R. O. Winans, Schaghticoke*

This tree was closely associated with King Philip and the Indian wars.



## HONORABLE MENTION

### THE MONUMENT TREE OF COBLESKILL



*By Mrs. Stanton France, 17 Grand St., Cobleskill*

There was a massacre of soldiers by the Indians under the leadership of Brant the famous Indian chief, June 1, 1778, and 25 bodies were thrown into the pond beside which the elm stands.

### THE PIONEER ELM



*By Mrs. James H. Manning, Ballston Spa.*

Near this elm stood the log cabin of Michael and Patrick McDonald, first white settlers in Saratoga County 1763. Where in 1767 rested Sir William Johnson when as an invalid his faithful Mohawks patiently bore him over the trail to Ballston Springs.

### WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS TREE



*By Edith K. Heald, 435 W. 119th St., N. Y. C.*

This tree is located at Pauling, New York, on the spot where Washington's headquarters were established September 12 to November 27, 1787, while the Continental army was camped nearby.

### THE COUNCIL MAPLE



*By E. C. Haddock, 259 Elbermarle St. Rochester*

Located on the old Hutchinson estate, Cayuga Lake near Cayuga. It is said Indians held their conferences under this tree. Many arrow heads have been dug up in that immediate neighborhood.

## WHY FOREST CONSERVATION IS NECESSARY

THE beauty and indirect benefits peculiar to forests would be sufficient argument for their conservation, yet one of the most distinguished American economists states that "The Civilization of North America is founded upon wood." Ninety-five per cent of the uses to which forest products are put must be classified as necessities of life. From the cradle to the coffin we are surrounded by them. Some idea of the service forests render to our national economy will be apparent from the following paragraphs.

### WOOD PRODUCTS

We are dependent upon wood, in one form or another, for our very existence. We never have been able to do without wood and never can. History proves this.

### STREAMFLOW REGULATION

In addition to furnishing an endless variety of essential wood products, forests are needed to regulate streamflow. We can not have a fresh, uniform and dependable supply of water unless the watersheds of our streams and rivers are clothed with forests.

### RECREATION

Forests are needed for recreational and health purposes such as camping, hunting, fishing, canoeing, hiking, etc. The American people demand such diversions and require the physical benefits of nature's great sanitarium, the forests.

### NEED FOR FORESTRY

If we are to have forests, we must practice forestry. But we have not practiced it in this country, consequently we are in the following serious situations:

We have cut or burned over  $\frac{5}{6}$  of our original timber area;  $\frac{3}{5}$  of the timber we once had is gone. Every year we are using and destroying timber more than four times as fast as it grows.

New York, formerly a great lumber producing state, now grows only  $\frac{1}{20}$  of the amount it consumes. The people of the state use more wood products and have more wood-using industries than any other state. They depend on



distant states for wood and pay many millions of dollars in freight to get it. New York has millions of acres suited for forest growth only, that are growing no trees at all.

### WOOD FAMINE NEAR

The true index of our timber supply is not however, wholly in the amount left but rather in its location or availability. Sixty-one per cent of our remaining merchantable timber is west of the Mississippi and  $1/2$  in the three Pacific coast states. We are fast becoming dependent upon the western timber. Transporting it to New York spells expensive lumber and higher costs of living.

It is up to us to grow timber here in the east where it is needed and to commence right away. Trees grow slowly. The sooner we start an adequate planting program the sooner one of the big items of living costs will be reduced and the less serious will be the approaching wood famine.

We must protect the forests that are left; we must reduce the amount of waste in logging and manufacture and we must put our idle lands to work growing timber.



## SAVE THE TREES

The most historical trees for you  
Are the trees always within your view;  
The trees that are nearest where you go  
Bestowing upon you all they grow.

Don't waste them.

The most important trees to you  
Are the trees that year to year renew  
The shade where you walk, the song of rest  
That comes from birds in their swinging nest.

Don't waste the trees.

Invaluable things that rise from earth,  
That give you a roof and warm your hearth,  
That brew from the rocks and forest loam  
The bub'ling spring, bring health to your home —  
The trees. Save them!

G. A. W.



## THE FOREST TRAGEDY

Which will you have?

Which will you give to  
American Boys and Girls?



PHOTO BY N. Y. STATE COLLEGE OF FORESTRY AND CONSERVATION COMM.

**HEALTH AND WEALTH**  
The Beautiful Forest Paradise



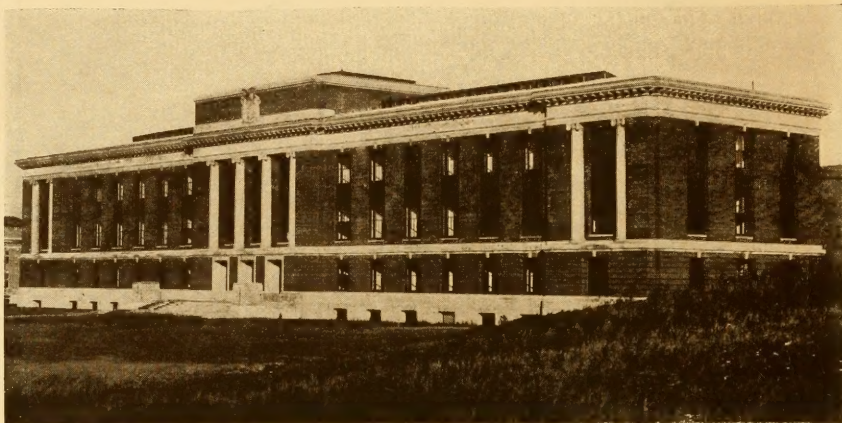
**DEVASTATION AND DEATH**  
The Ugly Forest Graveyard

New York Botanical Garden Library



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**The New York State College of Forestry**  
at  
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