

## Hoy Audubon Society

### Trees We Love, 2016

(Narrative: Sue Schuit

#### A Beech by the Beach

*"Mister!" he said with a sawdusty sneeze.*

*"I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees.*

*I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues.*

*And I'm asking you, sir, at the top of my lungs", Dr. Seuss, The Lorax*

Beech groves have been found in and near important places of power; the majestic presence of a Beech tree has been said to have inspired the building of Cathedrals; the high vaulting arches mimic the high arching branches of the Beech Queen. The Beech Queen is the consort of the Oak King.

#### Spring 1792

I am not a native of my place I am a foreigner from another. I am a European Beech, respected and admired by all - for I am the Mother of the Woods, the Beech Queen. I am a source of knowledge, the written word, understanding, sustenance and preservation.

My tale began long ago and my beginnings are known only to me. My region's tale belonged to the Indians until 1512 when it was taken over by Spain. France obtained title in 1627 and England in 1763. Could this chronicle perhaps provide clues to my birth? Could it be that a German family, an English family, a European family pocketed cherished memories of the old world and planted my nut to provide protection, luck and wisdom to their new?

My adopted land became part of the Northwest Territory in 1787, the Indiana Territory in 1800, territory of Illinois in 1809, territory of Michigan in 1818, territory of Wisconsin in 1836, and part and parcel of the State of Wisconsin in 1848.

#### Observed Observations

*Of vast circumference and gloom profound,*

*This solitary Tree! A living thing*

*Produced too slowly ever to decay;*

*Of form and aspect too magnificent*

*To be destroyed. William Wordsworth, Yew-Trees*

My territory changed little in my younger years. I, and my companion Beech, flourished among our consort Oak, Maples and Walnuts. My grove provided shelter from the moods of the seasons and the tempers of the water close by. My purple leaves contrast well with the backdrop of blue and the many shades of greens. We are striking in my woodland grove. My singular grey trunk is conspicuous among the browns and blacks of my companions.

It is 1840, we are slowly growing and our view is swiftly changing. My settlers are gone and my territory is now known as the Northwest Territory, Section 28. Section 28 was a school section and contained 500 acres, all of which is good land. Its north line was within a few rods of the court-house of the village of Racine. Elders warned that there was no school section in the territory half as valuable, with the exception of one in Chicago which was sold and the proceeds squandered. Despite such warnings the village sold off all of Section 28 with the exception of Block 19, East Park and Block 25, West Park.

East Park is located very close to my woods. Walking trails wind through this section and streets with names such as Main St., Tenth St. and 11th St. are laid. The cream of society promenaded along the walkways and it was not uncommon for the park to be patronized by over 3000 strollers enjoying the wonderful views and the lake breezes. An ornamental fountain once stood at their crossing and there were many who felt that it was the “most beautiful little park in the West”.

Mansions were built and I was now among society. Frederick Knapp, president of the Racine Wrench Company lived where the Beth Israel-Sinai Temple stands today. William Lewis, president of the Mitchell and Lewis Company resided in his mansion directly across the way, Otis Johnson, president of Fish Brothers Wagon Company built next door (now the Masonic Temple) and Lucius Blake had moved to 1024 Main St. (now Park Lane Apartments). The mansion of Massena B. Erskine stood where the Evangelical United Methodist Church is now, and the mansion of Joseph Miller is listed as 1100 South Main St.

In 1867 a woman by the name of Mrs. Lincoln visited Racine, seeking anonymity and peace of mind. The Racine Journal reported “We are happy to chronicle that Mrs. Lincoln has taken up her residence in this city”. Aside from this there is no further mention. Mrs. Lincoln stated to a friend that “I have surrounded myself with books and propose a great deal of reading, whilst I remain here”. She walked each day and took advantage of the beautiful scenery and weather. She passed silently among us and my leaves whispered words of consolation and sympathy; for she was a sad, lonely and despondent figure draped in grief.

## My Kind Of Town

*Woodman, spare that tree! Touch not a single bough! In youth it sheltered me, and I'll protect it now.* George P. Morris, *Woodman, Spare That Tree*

Mr. Stephen Bull and family I knew well. He was the guardian of my grove. Mr. Bull's mansion was built directly west of my woods (now East Park Towers) and in 1881 a cottage became our neighbor directly to the south of my realm.

It was of no matter to some that my woods were removed to make room for Mr. Bull's attendant barns and buildings. Mercifully my companion Beech was preserved when, in 1883, my neighboring cottage became the home of Charles Apgar, Stephen Bull's coachman.

By 1906 the cottage is empty but remodeled soon after. My fellow Beech is once again preserved, and the former servant's quarters became a home.

1920 and my shaded woods were but a memory. Yet, I was a tree of character and distinction. My beautiful grey trunk, my gnarled base and my large, exposed roots spread in all directions. My roots are shallow, thus I survived the construction of the English Tudor home built just yards from my trunk. Can there be any doubt that my beauty was my defense from destruction?

In 1963 East Park remained virtually intact when the University of WI, Racine campus is built. In 1965 my custodians were the Clausen family; a garage was erected and happily, the second of my remaining companion Beech was preserved. In 1969 my property was extended beyond the steep cliff and waters close beside me with the formation of Meyers Park. My realm acquired a new name, Lochnaiar (near the lake).

For two decades I remained in the stewardship of a law firm and in 1989 my domain became a bed and breakfast, Lochnaiar Inn.

My tale is long and my ancestry ancient; for I am the tree of knowledge, history and the written word. My trunk is massive, my canopy immense. I am a tree of character and distinction. I am a Beech Queen; impressive and dramatic. I am looked on with wonder; for I am truly a landmark tree, a heritage tree, and I am admired by many.

*For those who see with their senses,  
For those who feel what they hear;  
Come, sit in my shade,  
'neath my vast canopy.*

*My branches will murmur my wisdom.  
My leaves will whisper my past.*

*For I am the Beech by the Beach and the consort of kings,  
I am Mother of the Woods,  
I am the Beech Queen.*

**Personal aside: This Beech Tree award has special significance for me. I have known and loved this Beech for many years. When the idea was hatched for the Trees We Love program, this European Beech was, in part, my inspiration. She is a heritage tree, a landmark tree, a Tree I Love.**

**There are certain trees that have an emotional effect on us, be it for their age, size, beauty, significance in our lives, or a combination of all this and more. This Beech Queen is one such tree for me.**

**She is a personal tree and I am thrilled that she is loved by more than I.**

**Sue Schuit**