

IMAGES

... then and now

From The Indian Hill Journal



Buckingham Lodge
1861

The Historic Elm Tree – in the Nation and Indian Hill

One of Ohio's largest *Ulmus americanus* is located at a private residence in the Village. The majestic American Elm has been registered with the Ohio Big Tree program and the Elm Research Institute, which estimates it to be 375 years old. To determine its rank in Ohio, owner Brenda Butler hired an arborist to measure the circumference, vertical height, and diameter spread of the crown of the tree. These measurements were submitted to the State Division of Forestry. Currently the Indian Hill tree is a runner up to the champion, an American Elm located in Ross County.

Also known as the White Elm (probably because of its creamy white wood), it was once abundant from New England to the Rocky Mountains, and Canada to Florida. One of the most beautiful trees in the nation, it has a spreading fan shaped form, pendulous branches, and a graceful appearance. Guidebooks note its serrated leaves as alternate, 3 to 6 inches long, 1 to 3 inches wide, and elliptical. Its furrowed bark is light gray and deeply brownish; and small greenish flowers appear in early spring. The fruit is a winged samara. With an average height of 50-70 feet, its trunk diameter ranges from 4-5 feet. The wood is heavy, strong, and difficult to split, and was been used for paneling, furniture for baskets and crates.



the shade tree of choice in towns US. During the 1920s it was planted in village streets, public parks, pastures, and college campuses. Now nearly all the great elms are gone. Partially because of the lack of diversity in planting, the American Elm was susceptible to a fungus introduced from Europe. The disease – Dutch Elm Disease – was spread by bark beetles. The pathogen plugged the vascular system of the tree, preventing the flow of water and nutrients and slowly killing it. DED ravaged millions of elms, many of them dating from the 1700's.

Before Europeans arrived in America, the Iroquois used elm bark to make canoes and roofing for their homes. Elms were council trees for Native Americans; and under them, treaties were signed with Europeans. The first colonial settlers named the stately elm "the lady of the forest." In Boston, after the Stamp Act was passed, British ministers were hanged in effigy beneath an American Elm that was the town's Liberty Tree. Later British soldiers cut the tree down. The Washington Elm, under which George Washington assumed command of the Continental Army in 1775, remained standing until 1923. Most towns in the 13 colonies had an American Elm designated as a Liberty Tree; and elm trees have inspired poets for centuries, including Frost, Emerson, Wordsworth, Yeats, and Ovid.

The village's most regal American Elm is carefully tended by Brenda Butler. The previous owners placed a lightning rod on the tree, as it provided luxurious shade for their estate in the pre air-conditioning era. Butler uses arborists to protect the tree from DED; regular applications of medications are injected into the tree to help preserve this specimen for future generations.

Indian Hill's largest American Elm is 90 feet tall, with a circumference of 19 feet and a crown spread of 150 feet. Assuming it was a sapling about 1645, it predates the settlement of Ohio by pioneers. Undoubtedly this Big Tree has been a witness to much history. The plaque that recognizes it as an historic landmark is a fitting tribute to the stately giant.