

Hoy Audubon Society

Trees We Love, 2016

(Narrative: Sue Schuit)

Fall(en) Leaves

By the twenty-fifth of September, the Red Maples generally are beginning to be ripe. Some large ones have been conspicuously changing for a week, and some single trees are now very brilliant. I notice a small one, half a mile off across a meadow, against the green wood-side there, a far brighter red than the blossoms of any tree in summer, and more conspicuous. I have observed this tree for several autumns invariably changing earlier than its fellows, just as one tree ripens its fruit earlier than another. It might serve to mark the season, perhaps. I should be sorry, if it were cut down. Henry D. Thoreau (1817-1862), *Autumnal Tints*

Spring, 1851

I did not know Henry D. Thoreau; while he was of my time he was of a different place. I believe he knew me, am I not of whom he writes? He is now gone (yet his words live on), while I am here. He need not have feared for my untimely, ignoble death for I am a cherished tree. I am the Queen.

I am a Sugar Maple and my birth in approximately 1840 was clearly deliberate. I am the centerpiece and focal point of my realm and I am certainly not a fluke of nature.

Tales of My Time

My history will tell you that Rose and Samuel Skewes were among the earliest settlers of Ives Grove. Records indicate that the Skewes were prominent citizens of Ives Grove and owned, for a short time, more than 600 wooded acres. Ives Grove, prior to settlers, was a lush forest of Oak, Elm and Walnut and the Skewes farm was aptly named "Grovean" (small grove or woods - as it soon became), shortly after settling. Samuel

Skewes Jr. moved across the road and called his farm “Chybarles” (Cornish for “across the lea”).

Thomas Skewes owned 35 acres, a part of the original homestead. The Skewes were engaged citizens and in 1869, J.L. Skewes, Hannibal Skewes and George Skewes were elected trustees responsible for collections for, and building of, the Ives Grove United Methodist Church.

In 1873, the Ives Groves Plank Roads were past their prime yet I had only set my first flowers. In 1895 Samuel Skewes planted many black walnut trees on the family farm. In 1908 Thomas Skewes divided his parcel among Arthur Skewes and Jack Christiansen. Times changed, I remained.

The farmhouse was built within my domain in or around 1900 (I must confess, years have little meaning to trees) and one may wonder that the site chosen may have been with an eye towards me. I was then, and am now, a majestic, royal Sugar Maple.

I, a Sugar Maple, became Wisconsin’s official state tree in 1949 and in 1965 the Skewes donated their four-acre parcel of walnut groves to Racine County. It is now known as the Samuel Skewes Memorial Park.

Eventually the Lauber family rented my farm and raised their 6 children. Their children continue to farm my land while the home was purchased in 1989 by Dr. Joseph and Caroline Bergs. It is now called Piper’s Grove Farm. It suits me well.

Fall(en) Leaves

Piper’s Grove Farm has doubled in size (receiving a *Better Homes and Garden* remodeling award and a feature in *Midwest Living*); great care was taken to protect the ground on which I stand, beautiful gardens are lovingly tended and I now have two companion maples nearby.

Yet I am the Bergs’ pride and joy. A striking garden of hosta and daffodils has been fashioned to provide shade for my roots and a cushion for my seed. For I am the Queen. I am the Matriarch Maple and the stately, imperial oaks pay homage to my

beauty. For I am the sovereign Maple of my realm - and my crowning glory arrives every fall. My brilliant oranges, golds and reds will light up my sky and cast a glowing carpet of fallen leaves beneath my branches until covered by a blanket of sheltering snow. I shout out the last huzzah of my season with a glorious trumpet before taking my long, and well-deserved, rest.

Fall Leaves

What more remarkable object can there be in the autumn landscape? Visible for miles, a Sugar Maple is the crowning glory of autumn. Fall in Wisconsin is achingly beautiful; the most jaded of armchair quarterbacks feels the pull of nature, the quickening of the senses and the last, intense urge to ramble, to wander and sear our senses with the glowing brilliance which will, hopefully, sustain us through our next season. Wisconsin winter, the season of rest, the season of contemplation and recollection; devoid of colors, tints or hues other than soft browns and greys and simple black and whites.

*Once they came on a maple in a glade,
Standing alone with smooth arms lifted up,
And every leaf of foliage she'd worn
Laid scarlet and pale pink about her feet. Robert Frost, Maple*