

# The Cooksville Scots Pine

A record Scots pine kept the peace in an old cemetery in Cooksville, Rock County, a cemetery that might not have been there if Daniel Webster, the famous United States Senator, hadn't speculated in Wisconsin land at \$1.25 per acre. And the names on the tombstones certainly wouldn't have been those of friends of Webster to whom he, in turn, sold the holdings he had bought through a land agent in 1837.

Dr. John Porter, Webster's friend and physician, was one of the buyers. Many of his family settled what became Porter Township. Also settling there were the two Cook brothers who platted a village called Cooksville in 1842. "Waucoma" was the name the Porters chose for their adjacent village, platted in 1845. The railroad bypassed the merged hamlets, probably ensuring their later inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Because there was little development after the 1840s, the place remains today an accurate reflection of villages of that era. Perhaps uniquely for Wisconsin, it has a New England flavor, with its grassy commons that once grazed the community's livestock. The surrounding Greek Revival style homes are constructed of lovely, vermillion-colored local brick.

Many unusual and large trees were planted early in Cooksville and were much appreciated. The old cemetery's Scots pine, at 12 feet in circumference and 50 feet in height, was for years the largest of its kind in the state. It finally succumbed to age and weather in the late 1990s. There was also a huge black locust, a mulberry, a shagbark hickory and an unusually large river birch in the town.

Sources: H. Clifton Hutchins, Madison  
Larry Reed, Cooksville



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B-Wolfgang Hoffman (1982)