Delavan Civil War Sign-Up Tree

R. D. Durbin (1981)

Two Civil War Sign-Up Trees

Richland and Walworth Counties

Two historic trees, one in Richland County and one in Walworth County, remind us of the grim days of the Civil War era. They served as recruiting headquarters with young men reporting there to sign up to fight for the North's cause. The Richland County tree stood alone along Highway 56 in the Town of Marshall, a short distance north of the Fancy Creek Church and Cemetery. According to old-timers, local young men became members of Company H of the 46th Wisconsin Infantry in the cool shade under the tree's branches.

The stringing of telephone wires along Highway 56 threatened the very existence of the tree, but those who loved both trees and history prevailed and saved the old landmark from destruction. Unfortunately, a strong wind blew the tree over in the late 1970s.

Another tree connected with the Civil War is a bur oak in Delavan. Located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Seventh and Washington Streets in that city, the tree is estimated to be about 250 years old and is locally referred to as the "Civil War Tree." During the years 1861 to 1865, volunteers were mustered under it before they left by rail for training camps.

Although of significant age, the Delavan Oak is not a large specimen, primarily because, for over 170 years, the surface adjacent to it has been paved. For more than a century, also, a grapevine that grew up alongside the trunk entwined itself among the branches of the tree, affording sport for young tree climbers who swung on its tendrils.

Source: W. Gordon Yadon, Delavan