

Brule River White Pine

Douglas County

For many years, the state record white pine, whose companions were endangered eagles and ospreys, had a protected habitat in the Brule River State Forest. In the early 1980s, The Nature Conservancy had acquired by donation easements that effectively shielded 4,800 acres of privately owned land along nine miles of the Brule River from further encroachment. In addition to the former record holding white pine, the easement area contains one of Wisconsin's largest and highest quality virgin pine forests, with many individual trees approaching 300 years in age. Also protected is one of the state's largest cedar swamps, containing an endangered orchid and several unusually rich and diverse forest habitats, supporting more than 90 bird species, many of them quite rare in Wisconsin.

In 1962 the Brule white pine had a circumference of 17 feet 11 inches, only seven inches short of the national record white pine in Michigan.

As have several presidents, Calvin Coolidge spent some time along the Brule River in 1926, fishing and establishing a summer White House at a well-known resort called Cedar Island Estate. (During his stay in Wisconsin, he located the graves of his grandparents, Israel and Sally Brewer, in Columbia County.) One can imagine the 30th president of the United States, tiny and insignificant in size, standing beneath a record pine and gazing up that 151 feet of trunk, no doubt feeling a kinship with the old monarch in the practice of silence.

In the early 1980s one of the three large limbs of the pine fell, narrowly missing employees of the fish hatchery below. Unfortunately, even after pruning and repair by a volunteer crew of Allison Tree Care, Inc., it succumbed to old age and died.

Source: Russell Van Herik, Madison



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DNR (c. 1962)

Excerpted from *Every Root an Anchor: Wisconsin's Famous and Historic Trees* by R. Bruce Allison
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