

Alternate



Opposite



All trees and shrubs on our area have alternate branch and leaf patterns except for MAD-CAP-HORSE (Maple-Ash-Dogwood-Caprifoliaceae [Honeysuckle-Viburnum family] Horsechestnut.) These have opposite branch and leaf patterns.

Other Nearby Old-Growth Forest Sites

North Syracuse Cemetery Oak Grove 1.5 acres

White Oak, Black Oak, Red Oak,
Red Maple

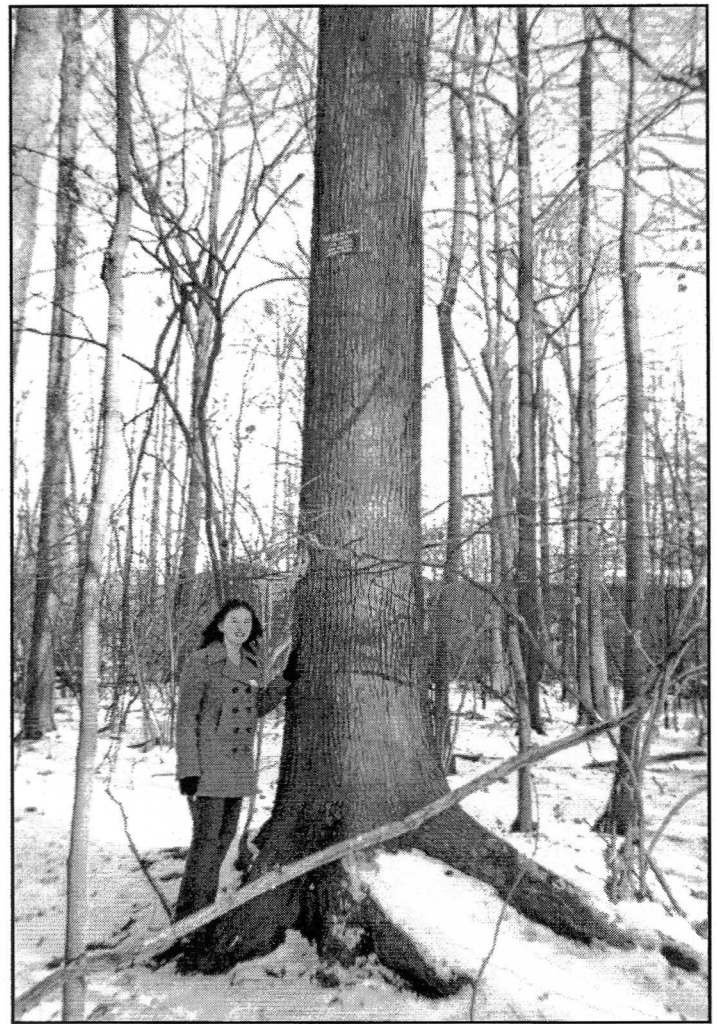
Liverpool School Maple Grove 11 acres

Wetzel Road Elementary School, Clay
Sugar Maple, Beech, Red Maple

Green Lakes State Park 1000 acres

Sugar Maple, Beech, Hemlock,
Tulip Tree, Basswood

NOTES



The Wizard of Oz Memorial Oak Grove

One of the most significant natural and historic sites in Onondaga County is the old oak grove covering about 7 acres behind the North Syracuse Junior High School running track. This grove contains some of the largest and oldest trees in Onondaga County.

The grove is an outstanding old forest (or old growth) example of the White Oak- Black Oak-Northern Red Forest Association, a forest type rare in central New York. It is the largest old oak forest yet discovered in Onondaga County. Dominant canopy trees are white oak, black oak, red oak, and red maple. Associate trees include black cherry, black tupelo, sassafras, beech, black birch, yellow birch, and white pine. Black oak, tupelo, and sassafras are rare in central New York and are only common much farther south.

This oak grove is called the Wizard of Oz Memorial Oak Grove because it is the most likely inspiration for the world famous Great Forest of Oz in L. Frank Baum's The Wizard of Oz. Although Baum was born in Chittenango, he grew up in the Syracuse-North Syracuse area and in 1868 moved to an estate called Rose Lawn in what is now Mattydale. It was at Rose Lawn that he began his life as a writer. This area was already family territory to Baum, and young L. Frank had several relatives in North Syracuse (then called Centreville) in the vicinity of the oak grove; the grove's owner, Perry Hinsdell, lived across the street from the Baums. The Great Forest is an important setting in many of Baum's Oz books,

and the first book, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, has a specific reference to an oak grove.

The grove's largest tree, a giant red oak that was alive in Baum's time, has been dedicated to him by the NSJHS Oak Grove Club, a student organization that promotes the preservation and interpretation of the grove. The Oak Grove Club has dedicated several other trees to important cultural figures.

Several trees have been cored by increment borer which extracts a core on which annual growth rings are counted; thus, it is possible to determine how old these trees are without harming them. Most of the large trees are between 130 and 170 years old, and a few are estimated to be over 200 years old.

The first recorded owner of the property was Capt. Peter Talman, veteran of the Revolutionary War, who drew Lot 91 of the Military Tract township of Cicero on which the oak grove sits. The Military Tract lots were 600 acres each and granted to veterans in 1790. The grove today is part of the Town of Clay as Clay was separated from Cicero in 1827. Talman may have sold white oak timber for salt barrels for the burgeoning salt industry; the Salt Road (now Route 11), built in 1812 for the shipment of salt from Onondaga Lake area, went by the grove. Talman held the property till 1819, after which it changed hands several times. Hinsdell who knew Baum (and for whom Hinsdale is named) owned the grove from 1850 – 1902. The North Syracuse Central School district has owned the grove since 1950.

The Wizard of Oz Memorial Oak Grove is one of the oldest and most pristine forests in Onondaga County. It has never been plowed, never completely cleared. Thus, the oak grove provides a window into the past of our earliest history. The grove displays many significant signs of old-growth or original forest. It has always been a forest, and some of its trees date back to before the first settlements were established in this area. Most of the grove's terrain is rolling pit and mound topography, a type of terrain that is caused by the decay of fallen trees over many centuries; mounds are caused by the decay of the upturned root mass and fallen trunk, and pits are depressions caused when high winds lift a large tree's root mass out of the ground. Most of the grove's 150 and more year old oaks and maples rise out of ancient treefall mounds, the remains of trees that were blown over centuries ago. Pit and mound topography is an extremely important characteristic of old-growth or original forest. The grove's other important old-growth characteristics include large old trees, fallen logs in varying states of decay, buttressed bases on large trees, large standing dead trees (snags), high flat-topped and spreading crowns. Most forests in central New York do not have these characteristics.

Apart from the northeastern and southeastern sections that were damaged by the Labor Day Storm of 1998, the rest of the grove has not been severely disturbed since well before the Civil War.

The Wizard of Oz Memorial Oak Grove is a valuable greenspace for the region, and it is an outstanding educational and ecological resource. Its connection to Baum and the Wizard of Oz gives North Syracuse's most important natural site international significance.

The oak grove has been examined by the founding members of the New York State Old-Growth Forest Association and by the Central New York Old-Growth Forest Survey. The oak grove is prominently featured in The Sierra Club Guide to the Ancient Forests of the Northeast by old-growth experts Bruce Kershner and Robert Leverett.

For further information or guided tours, please call Tom Howard at 452-0805 or Robert Henry at 458-7473.



Legend

Total Area

7 Acres

Major Trail

Blow down

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Scale

1 inch = 100 ft

Tree Species

S

Snag

○

White Oak

●

Black Oak

⦶

Red Oak

⊕

Red Maple

⊙

American Beech

⦶

Black Tupelo

⦶

Sassafras

⦶

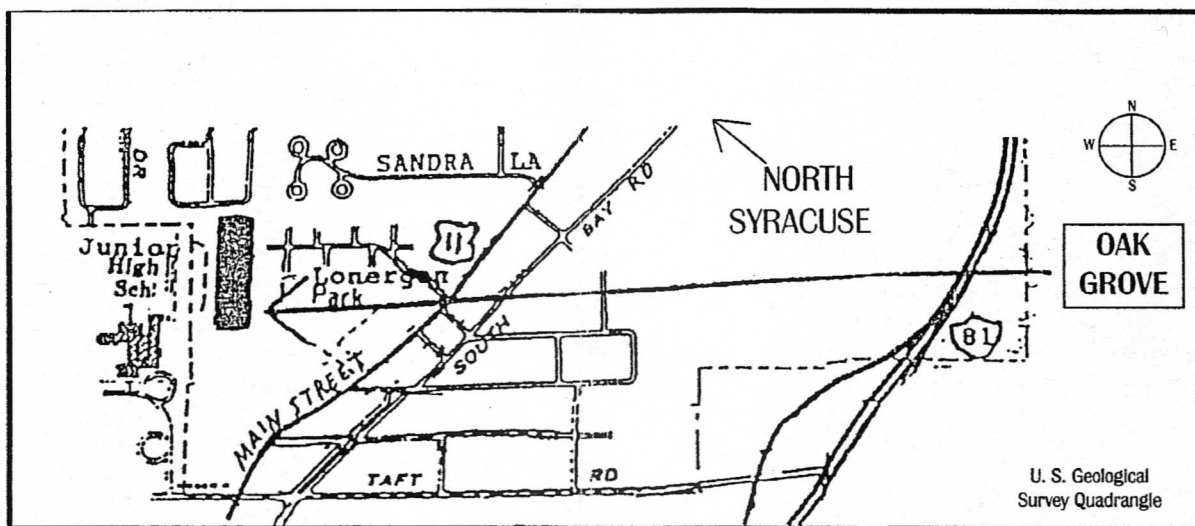
Black Cherry

⦶

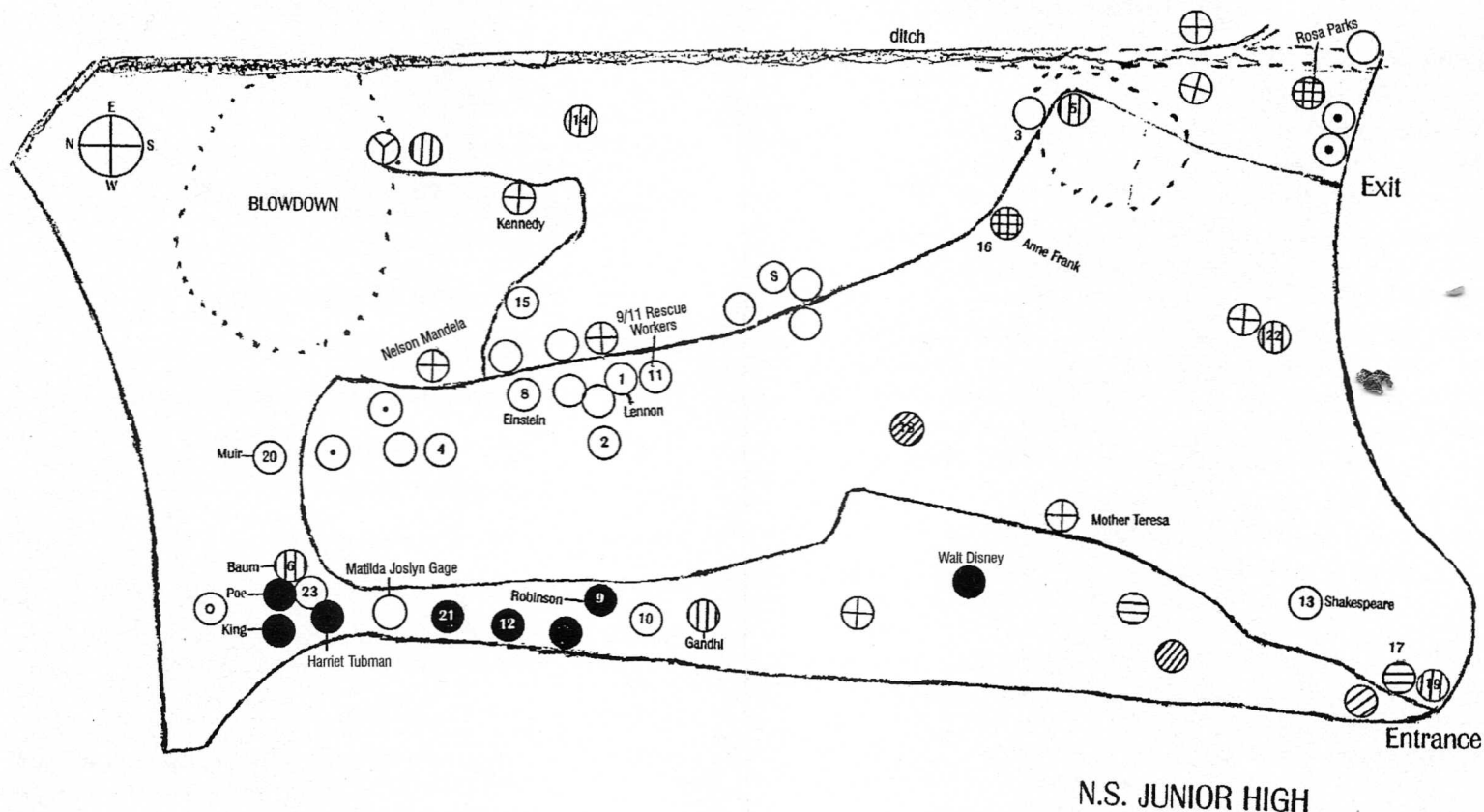
White Pine

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Yellow Birch



The Wizard of Oz Memorial Oak Grove



Dedicated Trees

Tree	Dbh	Plaque	Remarks
White Oak #13	28.3	WHITE OAK alive since 1845 dedicated to WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE author/poet	Cored Tree #13
Red Maple	20.5	RED MAPLE alive since 1900 dedicated to MOTHER TERESA missionary/mystic	double-trunked
Black Oak	36.1	BLACK OAK alive since 1840 dedicated to WALT DISNEY imagination, inspiration, and animation	hollow tree whimsical shape
Red Oak	41.5	RED OAK alive since 1860 dedicated to MAHATMA GANDHI social activist, principles of non- violence, courage, truth	
Black Oak #9	19.3	BLACK OAK alive since 1875 dedicated to JACKIE ROBINSON first African-American major league baseball player	Cored Tree #9 stump sprout original tree cut c. 1870
White Oak	32.8	WHITE OAK alive since 1820 dedicated to MATILDA JOSLYN GAGE mother-in-law of L. Frank Baum women's rights advocate	
Black Oak	32.6	BLACK OAK alive since 1850 dedicated to HARRIET TUBMAN rescuer on the Underground Railroad	northwest part of grove, symbolic of Canada to which she led many seeking freedom
Red Oak #6	47.7	RED OAK alive since 1860 dedicated to L. FRANK BAUM who grew up near here, was inspired by this oak grove	Cored Tree #6
Black Oak	49.6	BLACK OAK alive since 1840 EDGAR ALLAN POE Creator of American short story	largest Black Oak in Onon- daga County
Black Oak #7	34.7	BLACK OAK alive since 1870 dedicated to MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. human rights activist	Cored Tree #7
White Oak #20	36.5	WHITE OAK alive since 1860 dedicated to JOHN MUIR Naturalist, founder of National Parks and Sierra Club	Cored Tree #20 largest White Oak in grove
Red Maple	24.7	RED MAPLE alive since 1840 dedicated to NELSON MANDELA human rights activist AFRICA	103 ft. tall
White Oak #8	24.9	WHITE OAK alive since 1870 dedicated to ALBERT EINSTEIN scientist	Cored Tree #8 102 ft. tall
Red Maple	35	RED MAPLE alive since 1820 dedicated to JOHN F. KENNEDY President, led the nation throughout the Cold War	largest Red Maple in Onondaga Cty on spur trail east of Main Trail

Tree	Dbh	Plaque	Remarks
White Oak #1	29.8	WHITE OAK alive since 1840 dedicated to JOHN LENNON singer, songwriter, innovative musician	Cored Tree #1
Black Tupelo #16	18.9	BLACK TUPELO alive since 1830 dedicated to ANNE FRANK Holocaust victim, author	Cored Tree #16
White Oak	26.2	WHITE OAK alive since 1840 dedicated to 9/11 RESCUE WORKERS Always Remember	Cored Tree #11 114 ft. tall
Black Tupelo	20	BLACK TUPELO alive since 1830 dedicated to ROSA PARKS protester for human dignity	southeast corner grove

Core Data

NSJHS Oak Grove likely dates of cored trees

	Dbh	Core Age	Tree Date
White Oak 1	29.8	111	1808
White Oak 2	27.9	124*	1860
White Oak 3	31.2	102	1846
White Oak 4	22.6	111*	1875
Red Oak 5	56.5	77	1770-1998(fell)
Red Oak 6	47.7	104	1860
Black Oak 7	34.7	62	1870
White Oak 8	24.9	120	1820
Black Oak 9	19.3	120*	1870
White Oak 10	18.9	110*	1880
White Oak 11	26.2	139	1828
Black Oak 12	29.2	101	1865
White Oak 13	28.3	94	1813
Red Oak 14	31.6	80	1880
White Oak 15	25.2	61	1847
Tupelo 16	18.9	183	1770
Cherry 17	14.3	82	1873
Sassafras 18	12.3	96*	1895
Red Oak 19	38.4	41	1865
White Oak 20	36.5	123*	1860
Black Oak 21	30.9	55	1875
Red Oak 22	25.6	77	1868
White Oak 23	18.5	134*	1855

Dbh = diameter at breast height (approx. 4.5 ft from ground)

* = core reached pith or center of growth

Tree Identification

White Oak	light bark
Red Oak	dark gray smooth bark with wide ridges on older trees
Black Oak	bark almost black and very rough, much rougher than red oak
Beech	bark gray and smooth
Yellow Birch	bark yellowish and peeling
Black Cherry	bark black, on older trunks like black cornflakes
Black Tupelo	bark gray and rough, similar to white oak but blockier, 90 degree branch pattern, branches often crooked
Sassafras	bark brown and blocky
Red Maple	bark gray and smooth on young trees (usually), on older trees darker, rough, peeling on old trees, tends to mimic other trees, opposite branch pattern