

# A TREE WALK IN THE *North Side*

IOWA CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY

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PAMPHLET FILE



## HERITAGE TREES OF IOWA CITY

HERITAGE TREES is a group of citizen volunteers who work with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, neighborhood associations, Project GREEN, the City Council and the Forestry Division of Iowa City to preserve, maintain, and replenish Iowa City's trees. We thank these groups for their contributions to the Heritage Trees endeavor.

HERITAGE TREE PROGRAM  
c/o Neighborhood Services Coordinator  
Civic Center  
410 E. Washington Street  
Iowa City, IA 52240

This walking tour results from the tree inventory which volunteers compiled in this neighborhood during the summer of 1994. Every tree located in the public right-of-way and in the front yards of private homes was identified, measured, and mapped on survey forms designed by committee volunteers. This information forms a database that will aid the city forester to determine more easily which areas need more trees and what species do best in certain locations. Trees notable for their size and age, the Heritage Trees, will receive special recognition.

In a second phase of the project, the group hopes to begin tree stewardship and educational programs throughout the city. The third phase of the project will use the inventory to create a master plan for future tree plantings in the surveyed areas: the Goosetown, Longfellow, and North Side neighborhoods; Woodlawn Circle; Plum Grove; and Oakland Cemetery.

The Heritage Tree Project hopes to serve as a model for other neighborhoods that share its goals of planning and planting for the Iowa City of the future. Many cities in the United States are currently initiating similar projects.

We hope that you will appreciate the beauty and diversity of these trees which contribute so much to the quality of life in Iowa City.

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**TOUR ETIQUETTE:** While you stroll and enjoy the beauty of this neighborhood, please be courteous. Many trees are located on private property, so please be content to view them from the sidewalk. Street addresses are given only to help you locate the trees. Please respect the privacy of the residents and do not disturb them.

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## The North Side and Its Trees

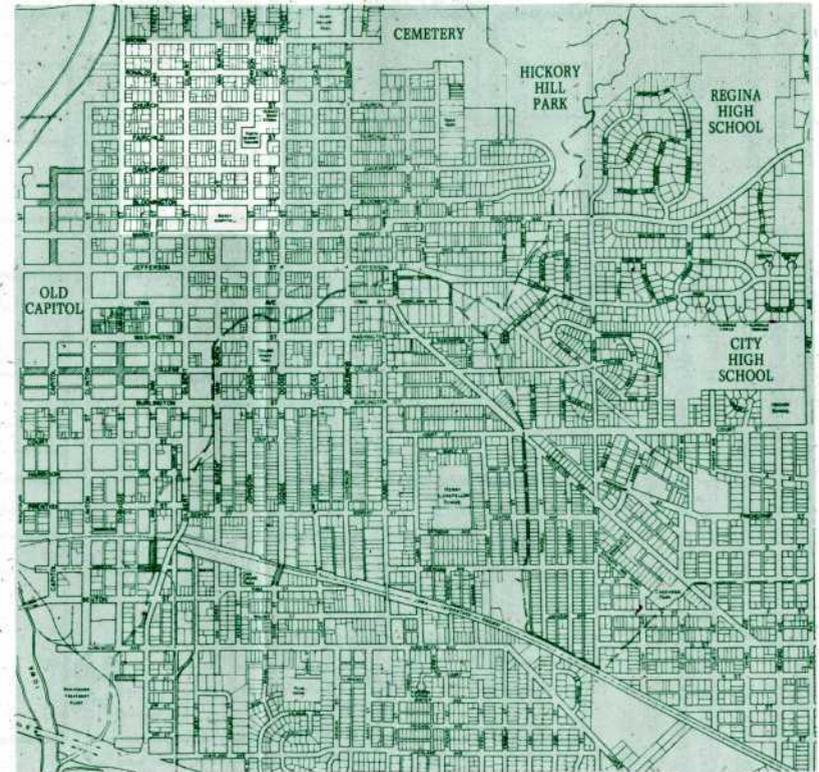
Welcome to Iowa City's oldest residential neighborhood, the North Side. From 1839 until today, 150 years later, this neighborhood has held a prominent place in the city's history. This is the only remaining residential neighborhood to have trees planted by the town's earliest inhabitants. In this neighborhood, which is north of the business district and east of the university, people of varying ethnic groups, professions, and stations in life have always lived side by side.

The neighborhood is celebrated for its tree-lined streets where mature hardwoods create a cooling canopy in the summer and breathtaking color in the fall, but it was not always so. What you see today is the neighborhood's second urban forest. When the town was surveyed and divided into lots for sale, the land was cleared of all trees. But the town council in its desire for a beautiful city passed the first tree "ordinance" in 1858 to encourage the planting of trees by offering a tax rebate of twenty-five cents for each tree planted following the city's guidelines. Trees were planted in great numbers, mostly elms.

In the 1950s Dutch elm disease arrived in Iowa and over the next twenty years destroyed much of this early urban forest. Especially laid bare were the streets of the North Side, which had been lined with American elm. The City of Iowa City, determined to see the city streets canopied with trees again, instigated a replanting program which paid careful attention to providing a variety of tree species to avoid calamities like that caused by Dutch elm disease.

The oldest trees in the neighborhood are mostly species which were not destroyed during the 1950s-70s. On this tour you will see six magnificent maples, three elms that escaped Dutch elm disease, and several ash trees, all of which date to before 1900. We direct your attention to these Heritage Trees with a feeling of pride and thankfulness for the wisdom of our early city residents and planners, but we ask that you notice our various younger additions as well. The city and the North Side residents continue to work together to maintain and improve this important urban forest.

SITE OF THE NORTH SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD  
TREE WALK



## NORTH SIDE TREE WALK

- 1 **524 N. Johnson Street** (Preucil School of Music). These four American lindens (*Tilia americana*), 1945, and hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), 1920, provide a pleasant group. The lindens produce fragrant clusters of yellowish flowers in spring. The hackberry is easy to spot because of the warty appearance of the bark.
- 2 **530 Ronalds Street**. This American elm (*Ulmus americana*), 1855, in the front yard is the oldest found in the North Side. It survived the terrible disease that wiped out most of the elm population in the past few decades. The American linden (*Tilia americana*), 1910, is a grand specimen, measuring 115 inches in circumference. A few years ago a companion linden that had rotted from the inside crashed into the street.
- 3 **515 Ronalds Street**. The three American sycamores (*Platanus occidentalis*), 1945, are part of the plane tree family. This tree is popular for its shade, but its peeling bark and large, late-falling leaves make it a less desirable yard tree for some.
- 4 **418 Church Street**. This 100-year-old sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), 1895, is the type tapped in the spring for its sugary sap, which is boiled down to make maple syrup.
- 5 **316 Church Street**. Another exceptional example of *Acer saccharum*, this sugar maple was planted about 1885. These trees are valued for their shade and for their wood, used in furniture making. The foliage provides a bright display of color in the fall.
- 6 **324 Church Street**. This hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), 1895, is the oldest in the neighborhood. Hackberries are related to the elms and are probably our best replacement for them.
- 7 **228 Church Street**. Blue spruce (*Picea pungens glauca*), 1920, and Japanese yew (*Taxus caspidata capitata*), 1920. These trees form a nice grouping which shelters the house from street traffic. The blue color is caused by a layer of wax on the needle's surface. Yews are usually kept trimmed as shrubs, but will grow to tree size, 20 to 40 feet high, as they have here.
- 8 **533 Linn Street**. Two sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*), 1925. Also called hard maple, this is one of the most plentiful trees in the North Side and helps turn the neighborhood aglow in the fall.
- 9 **Linn and Fairchild streets**. This location provides a number of specimens. On the northeast corner is a green ash dating to 1935; up on the terrace of 506 N. Linn are two American sycamores, and to the east of them, low-spreading, is a magnificent magnolia—all these trees date from about 1945. Looking east, south, and west from this corner, you can see trees planted by the city since the 1970s. Their variety and vitality are a tribute to the city's continuing policy of providing the city with shade and ornamental trees. The view looking east down the 300 block of Fairchild is especially satisfying to see today, as this block was planted with elms which all died before 1970, leaving the area bare.
- 10 **217 E. Davenport Street**. Blue spruce (*Picea pungens glauca*), 1920, and hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), 1895. All spruces can be recognized by four-sided needles, nearly square in cross-section.
- 11 **220 E. Bloomington Street**. Silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), 1885. Also known as a soft maple, this tree is usually planted for its rapid growth. It makes a good shade tree but is not so colorful as other maples in the fall. After living over a hundred years, this tree is succumbing to decay in the main trunk and should probably be removed.
- 12 **228 E. Bloomington Street**. This is another grand specimen of sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), 1920, with a trunk circumference of 120 inches.

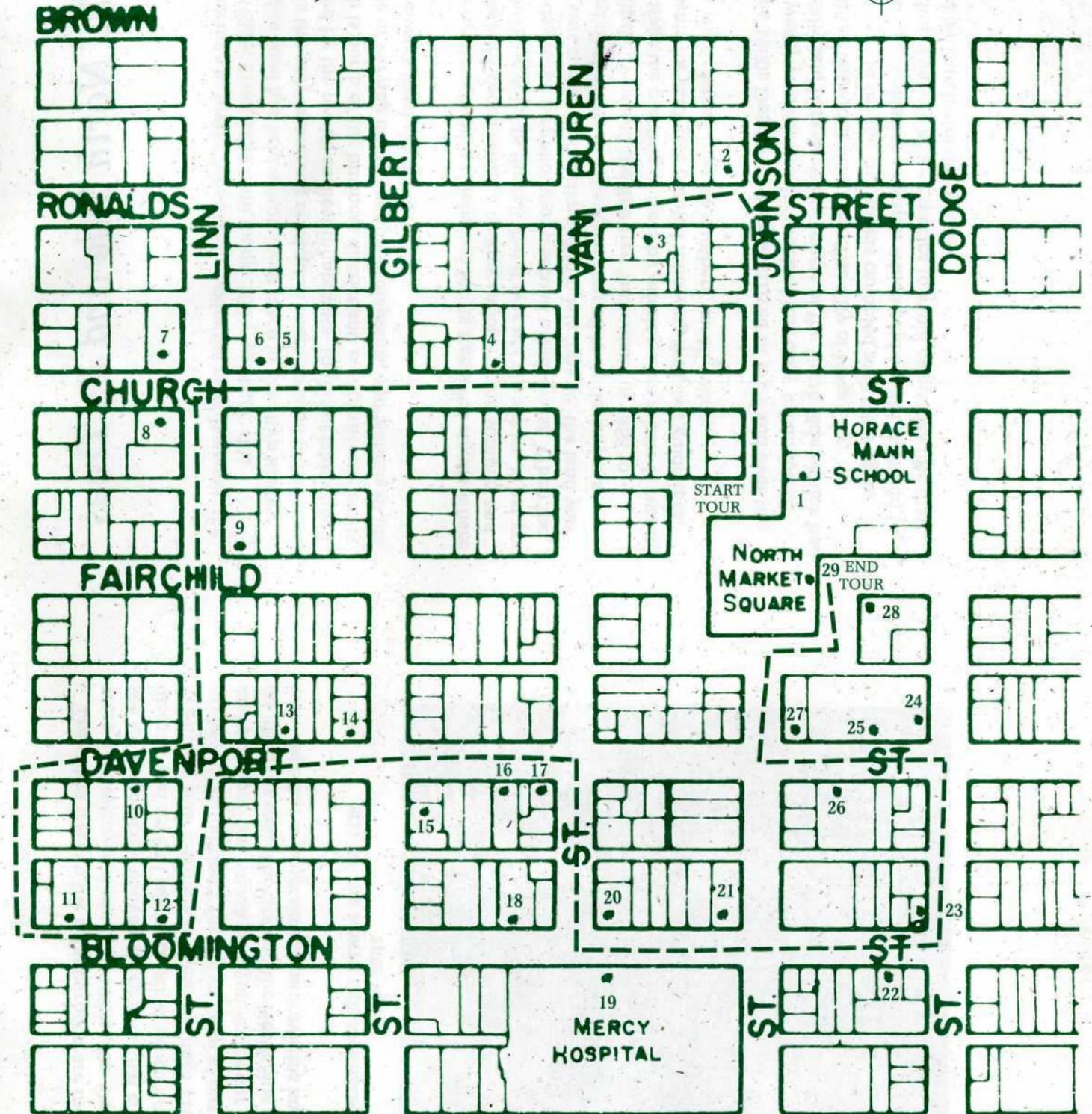
Across Linn Street you can see the former National Hotel, built in 1875 by Joe Slezak, a Bohemian immigrant. Iowa City's Bohemian

residents and visitors used this hotel as one center for their activities. Slezak Hall, once located on the upper floor, was used for receptions and dances. The rear section along Linn Street is the Holub (son-in-law of Joe Slezak) Apartments. The first-floor front, formerly the site of a grocery store, is occupied by Pagliai's Pizza.

- 13 **312 E. Davenport Street**. Another 100-year-old sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), 1885.
- 14 **332 E. Davenport Street**. Green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica lanceolata*), 1895. Ash varieties are popular in the North Side as a good shade tree. While we enjoy its sheltering qualities, the tough, fine-grained, elastic wood of the ash is also valued in the production of baseball bats.
- 15 **324 N. Gilbert Street**. Pagoda dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*), 1970. In more recent years, neighbors with a desire for the diversity of more unusual species have planted different varieties of dogwoods. Many of the ornamental varieties have a relatively short lifespan of 25-35 years.
- 16 **421 E. Davenport Street**. Southern pin oak (*Quercus palustris*), 1925. The pin oak gets its name from the pin-like twigs that clutter the downward sloping branches. Its hardy nature makes this a very good choice for street and ornamental plantings, but the pin oak seems to be rare in the North Side.
- 17 **331 E. Davenport Street**. Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), 1920. The Douglas-fir is a conifer native to the western U.S. and Canada. Next to the giant sequoia, the Douglas-fir is the largest tree in North America. Some grow over two hundred feet tall, though one hundred feet is common.
- 18 **430 E. Davenport Street**. Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*), 1930. This stately tree with its double trunk provides shade and shelter to people as well as to a neighboring family of owls.
- 19 **400 block of E. Bloomington Street**, south side of Mercy Hospital. Green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica lanceolata*), 1960. An impressive visual impact can be created by mass planting a single tree specimen. However, as we learned from the disaster of the American elm, a potential disadvantage is the vulnerability of the site if disease or blight should strike the species.
- 20 **504 E. Bloomington Street**. Silverbell tree (*Halesia carolina*), 1975. This lovely ornamental tree has clusters of white bell-shaped flowers in the spring. Its fruit is elongated with four papery wings.
- 21 **530 E. Bloomington Street**. American elm (*Ulmus americana*), 1920. Just a few years ago, a large branch hanging over N. Johnson Street had to be removed because it blocked the view. See how the tree is attempting to cover the scar. Across N. Johnson to the east, you can see a very large Siberian elm.
- 22 **625 E. Bloomington Street**. White spruce (*Picea glauca*), 1915. Although spruce wood is valued as a soft yet fairly strong wood free from knots, its greatest value is the work it does as a living tree, offering shade, pollution control, and habitat for wildlife.
- 23 **530 E. Bloomington Street**. American elm (*Ulmus americana*), 1875. A truly amazing tree—having survived decades of city growth and traffic, it also survived the blight of the early 1970s that destroyed approximately ten thousand elms in Iowa City alone.
- 24 **St. Wenceslaus Church**, Dodge Street side. Maidenhair tree (*Ginkgo biloba*), 1965. Looked upon as a fossil tree because its leaves have remained unchanged for millions of years, the ginkgo is considered a conifer despite its deciduous nature. The fruit from the female trees is thought by many to have a very unpleasant odor.
- 25 **608-610 E. Davenport Street**. American elm (*Ulmus americana*), 1895, which is still in good health at one hundred years of age. A tree's age can be estimated by its circumference at four feet above the ground; this one is 125 inches.

## TOUR ROUTE

NORTH



- 26 **600 E. Davenport Street** (Zion Lutheran Church parking lot). Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), 1875.
- 27 **Northeast corner of E. Davenport and N. Johnson streets**. Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), 1885. Another centenarian.

- 28 **623 Fairchild Street**. Black oak (*Quercus velutina*), 1860. This species is rare in the North Side. A notable feature is the two-year time period these trees need to mature acorns.
- 29 **Market Square Park**. A wealth of tree varieties and ages. Three of the trees were planted by the North Side neighborhood; the red oak on the northwest corner bears a ground marker stating that it was planted to celebrate Iowa City's 150th birthday.