

Boscobel's Dean Oak

If fame means anything to a tree, the 300-year-old Dean Oak near Boscobel in Grant County should feel well honored. Sometimes called the Charter Oak, the venerable monarch has had its share of recognition. It has had its portrait painted in oils and it is, by verbal agreement at least, a landholder.

The painting of the white oak, by R. F. Ferris, hangs in the Boscobel Public Library. As for its landowner status, it may not be a matter of record in the Grant County Courthouse, but old-timers assure us of its truth.

The tree was large and impressive when Charles K. Dean, the founder of the city of Boscobel, bought the land on which the tree stands. He grew exceedingly fond of it. When, prior to 1890, a 12-acre piece of the Dean farm was sold to John Verrill, pioneer Boscobel horse trader, Dean made the oral stipulation that the tree was to have one-third of an acre deeded to it and was never to be cut during its lifetime.

Undoubtedly, the old oak has witnessed much history. It grows one mile east of Boscobel on Homer Road (County Trunk S), beside what used to be an Indian trail connecting Galena, Illinois, the end of the railroad from where so many settlers walked into Wisconsin, with Prairie du Chien. One can imagine parties of pioneers or Native Americans stopping beneath the tree's pleasant shade to talk, play a game or rest. In fact, the oak is said to serve as the final resting place of an Indian chief known as Thunderbird.

Today the Dean Oak is not as majestic as it once was. It has lost some of its branches to lightning, and windstorms have taken their toll.

Source: Ralph Goldsmith, Boscobel



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DNR (c.1955)



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B-Wolfgang Hoffman (1982)