

# The Cameron Council Oak

## Oshkosh

Living with a big tree makes it easy to give directions. The Stevensons, in Oshkosh, used to tell people their house was next to the big bur oak because everyone knew where that was. Already mighty before the early settlers came to Wisconsin Territory, the Cameron Oak was a favorite council tree for the Native Americans in the area.

Known as the Cameron Oak for a former owner of the land, the venerable tree was estimated to be over 350 years old. It was originally part of an oak grove cut down to make room for the campus of the University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh.

Bars bolted through the two main trunks and three support wires helped stabilize the monarch. Even though it was regularly trimmed of dead wood and fertilized to keep it in top condition, it came down during a storm in the mid 1990s.

A false story that a man was murdered under the tree when it was still part of the original oak grove circulated for years. However, the great-granddaughter of the murdered man recently set the story straight. Her ancestor was not killed under the oak

but some distance away at the site of what is now Blackhawk Commons.

Deprived of connection with a grisly event, the tree was dramatic, nevertheless, in its beauty. Birds' nests hidden among the branches brought new life to it each spring; squirrels lived there all year long. In the fall the tree produced bushels of leaves and barrels of acorns. It was a favorite stopping point for school children on field trips. The urge to climb it was sometimes irresistible and occasionally the owners would look up to see college students out on limbs.

D. N. Cameron remembered climbing the old oak as a boy to watch a circus performance in a nearby clearing. He was responsible for saving the tree during the ice storm of 1929, setting up a dozen wooden supports to prevent the ice-laden branches from breaking.

Sources: Allen L. Singstock, Oshkosh  
Sandra Taubel, Oshkosh  
Rod Brusius, Oshkosh  
Tracy Salisbury, Green Bay