



Columbus Cottonwood

B-Wolfgang Hoffmann (1979)

The Columbus Cottonwood

Dodge County

An Eastern poplar (cottonwood) reigned over the John Crombie farm near Columbus in Dodge County as the tree with the largest trunk circumference in Wisconsin. Its trunk, which divided part way up, measured 26 feet 2 inches in circumference; it was 99 feet tall with a crown spread of 101 feet in 1980 when it was measured for inclusion in the first edition of *Wisconsin's Champion Trees*. In total points combining circumference, height and crown spread, however, it fell short of the Montello cottonwood, which, though smaller in girth, was taller and had a bigger crown spread. Remeasured for the 2005 edition of *Wisconsin's Champion Trees*, the Columbus cottonwood circumference has grown to 30 feet.

Although the Crombie family had lived on the farm for two generations, John Crombie says he didn't remember his father, who bought the farm in the 1930s, ever mentioning the tree. It stood about 50 or 60 rods from the house and was visible from the road, but somehow it didn't look as large as it was. It was only when Crombie read in the Beaver Dam *Daily Citizen* about another tree's claim to the top rank that he went out and measured his own, sending the figures to the tree record compilers at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

For more than a century, this top contender remained modestly in the background, content with doing the things trees do best. With the publication of *Wisconsin's Champion Trees* in 1980, however, it gained a deserved fame as a cover tree and poster.

Source: John Crombie, Columbus

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