



photographs and text by jeffkrueger

HISTORIC TREES

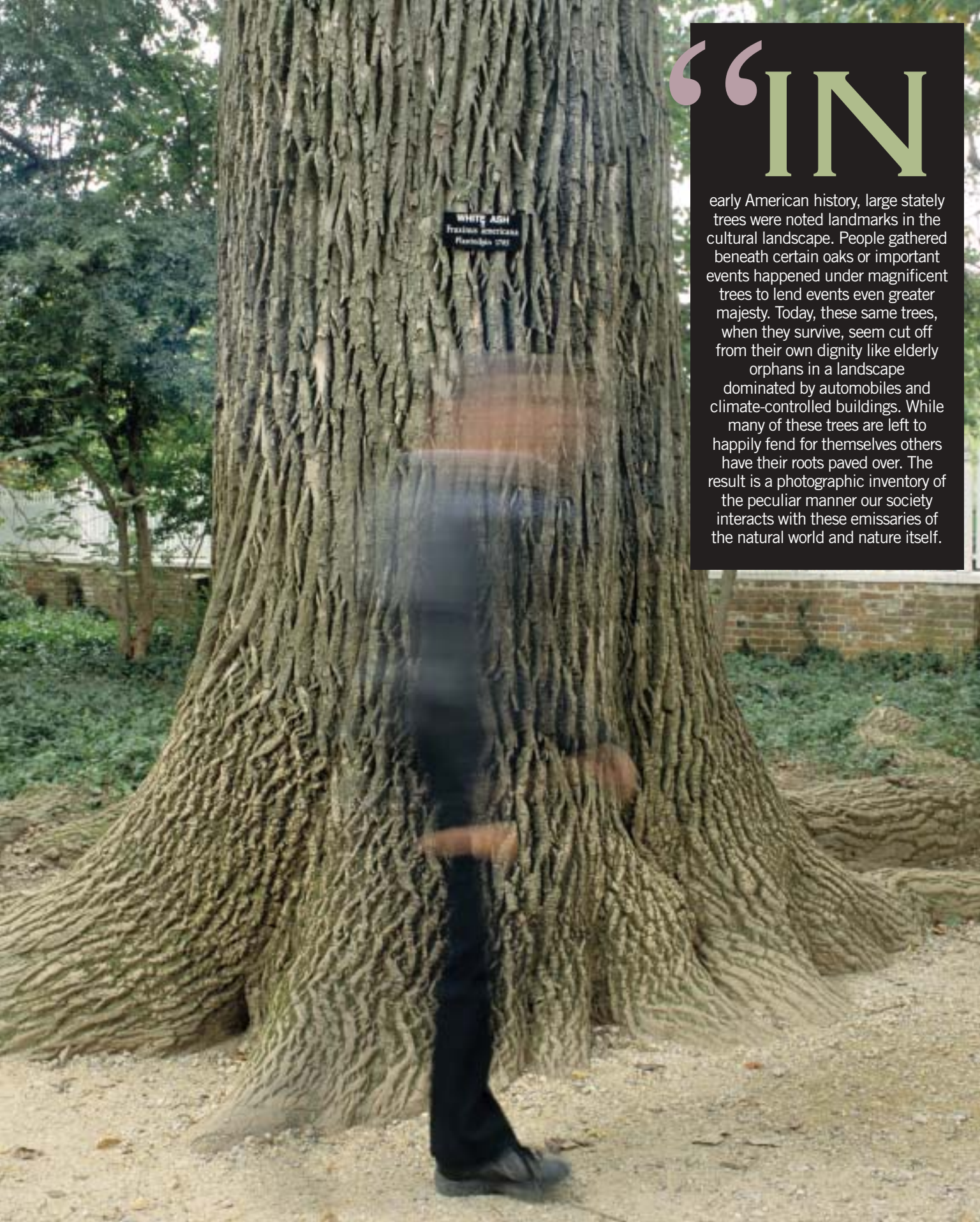


Jeff Krueger is a photographer based in St. Paul, Minn. Fascinated by ancient trees, in 1998 he began working on a Historic Trees Project. That work won a 2001 McKnight Foundation Fellowship Grant that recognized his efforts and helped him further his project. "To date I have photographed over 75 historic tree sites in 24 states," Krueger says. "What makes a tree historic is, of course, a subjective judgment." Many are displayed on his Web site, [www.jeffkrueger.net](http://www.jeffkrueger.net).



**Endicott Pear** [previous page] John Endicott, first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, started planting his orchard in the seaside town of Danvers in 1632. This orchard is thought to be one of the first European cultivated nurseries in the New World. The Endicott Pear (*Pyrus communis* var. *Bon Chretien*), planted around 1640, is believed to be a living remnant of this orchard. In 1964, vandals stripped every leaf and branch. The town rallied around the tree as its trunk stubbornly resprouted the next year. It still bears hundreds of sweet pears. **Adams Yellowwood** [left] The planting of the yellowwood (*Cladrastis kentukea*) at Adams National Historic Park, Quincy, Mass., is attributed to Louisa Catherine Adams, (1775–1852), but date of planting is unknown. **Survivor Tree** [below] On April 19, 1995, a terrorist bomb killed 168 people in or near the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. A previously unremarkable American elm (*Ulmus americana*) in the parking lot across the street was stripped, scorched and blackened by the blast. Surprisingly, it releafed and henceforth became a symbol of resilience to the community and nation. During the design of the new national memorial, survivors and surviving family members asked that the Survivor Tree take a prominent position. **Mt. Vernon White Ash** [right] Next to a path at Mount Vernon walked by hundreds of visitors each day stands a massive white ash (*Fraxinus americana*) planted by George Washington. Washington was a great lover of trees: His diaries of 1760–88 include more than 10,000 words about tree plantings and observations of species habits. Mount Vernon is home to 13 tree specimens planted by Washington around 1785, when he improved his serpentine walk.





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early American history, large stately trees were noted landmarks in the cultural landscape. People gathered beneath certain oaks or important events happened under magnificent trees to lend events even greater majesty. Today, these same trees, when they survive, seem cut off from their own dignity like elderly orphans in a landscape dominated by automobiles and climate-controlled buildings. While many of these trees are left to happily fend for themselves others have their roots paved over. The result is a photographic inventory of the peculiar manner our society interacts with these emissaries of the natural world and nature itself.



**Dueling Oak** [left] In the early 19th century, duels were all too common in New Orleans. Duels with foils, sabers, rapiers, bowie knives, poison pills, pistols and shotguns are recorded. A pair of live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*) located sufficiently far from town were a favored site for Creole gentlemen to settle disputes of honor. As many as 10 duels in a day might occur sometimes witnessed by 200 or 300 spectators. By the mid-1800s the surrounding live oak forest was being used as an informal park (now City Park) and the police began to enforce laws outlawing duels. No duels are recorded after 1891. Only one of the Dueling Oaks survives today. A crypt of unknown provenance lies beneath.

**Pinchot Sycamore** [top right], on Route 85 at the Farmington River, Simsbury, Conn. With a trunk 25 feet in circumference and a branching spread of 138 feet, the Pinchot Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) is the largest tree in Connecticut. Gifford Pinchot, an early and influential conservationist, was born in Simsbury and likely knew this hulk of a tree that was dedicated to him in 1965. Along with President Theodore Roosevelt, Pinchot helped found the U.S. Forest Service.

**Coolidge Sugar Maple** at the Coolidge Homestead, Plymouth Notch, Vt. In August 1923, Vice President Calvin Coolidge returned to his boyhood home for a vacation. The famously quiet and unassuming politician set about repairs that needed to be done about his parents' house. A news photographer made a picture of Coolidge tending to the sugar maples (*Acer sacchaum*) in front of the house on August 2. That night, Coolidge received word by telegraph that President Harding had died. Coolidge and his father, a notary public, stepped out in front of the house, beneath these trees, and at 2:47 a.m., swore the oath of office of the President of the United States. "Silent Cal" is reported to have gone back to bed.





**William Penn Oak** [left] In William Penn's agreements with land purchasers, he stipulated that one acre in every five of forest must not be felled. Thus, he preserved much of the original forest. Pennsylvania was also a haven for Penn's fellow Quakers. Appropriately, the London Grove Friends built their "meeting" (place of worship) near one such protected white oak (*Quercus alba*), called the Penn Oak because Penn reportedly took a meal here. This tree is the Pennsylvania State Champion for its species. **Evangeline Oak** [below] The famous live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) beside the Bayou Teche in St. Martinville, La., witnessed the tragic end of an epic love story. The true story of Evangeline and Gabriel as told in Longfellow's poem "Evangeline" begins in Nova Scotia. In 1755, the English governor forced the French Acadians to swear allegiance to the crown and forswear Catholicism or leave. So persecuted, many found their way to Louisiana, a French colony tolerant of Catholicism. One young couple betrothed in Canada and then divided found their way separately to St. Martinville. Louis Arceneaux ("Gabriel") arrived first at the wharf beneath the live oak. Three years later, Emmeline Labiche ("Evangeline") arrived with her wedding gown, only to learn that Louis, believing her lost, had married another. Heartbroken, she soon died. **Cathedral Oak** [right] This incredible tree next to St. John's Cathedral, LaFayette, La., is thought to be 450 years old and is the third-largest live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) in the United States.







**Battle of Gettysburg Witness Tree** [right, above] This swamp oak (*Quercus bicolor*) stands near the headquarters of Major General Daniel Edgar Sickles. Six other trees, witnesses of the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863, still survive. **American Elms** [left, above] In 1921, the city of Minneapolis planted rows of American elms (*Ulmus americana*) along 3.5 miles of Victory Memorial Drive, one tree for each of the World War I soldiers lost from Hennepin County. **Sycamore at LaFayette's Quarters** [below] Brandywine Battlefield. The Marquis de LaFayette, aide to Washington, saw his first battle at Brandywine, Chadd's Ford, Pa. He was quartered the night before at the stone farmhouse of Gideon Gilpin (visible on the right). This large sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) estimated to be more than 320 years old stands near Gilpin's house and has been incorrectly rumored to be the spot where LaFayette's leg wound was dressed. In 1825, LaFayette returned to the site to visit Gilpin and the tree. 🌳

