

# Milwaukee's Menomonee River Parkway Elm

At one time the state record American elm towered over its fellows in Milwaukee County's Menomonee River Parkway, near Center Street in Wauwatosa. It had reached the majestic height of 145 feet and had a circumference of 21 feet 2 inches before it died in 1968, a victim of Dutch elm disease. Its age was 296 years, which meant it had established itself just a few years after the arrival of Jean Nicolet, the first French explorer to set foot in the territory, which became Wisconsin.

The tree had been in perfect health up until a few months before it died. It had been sprayed with DDT and injected with Bidrin every year to protect it from the bark beetles that carry Dutch elm disease, and the county forester had planted densely growing shrubs and thorny bushes around its base—and even a little poison ivy—to discourage vandals.

The tree missed its annual protective treatment in 1968 because high water prevented the county forester from reaching it. The elm was in a hollow some 75 yards off the road, near the river.

"It was a very beautiful tree," the forester lamented in a *Milwaukee Journal* article. "We're very upset and we're going to miss it. It will leave a big gap." He said he would save some cross sections of the trunk. "It's the only thing we'll have to remember it by."



*Menomonee River Parkway Elm*

*Milwaukee Journal* (1968)