

The Military Road Sycamore

Fond du Lac

A combination of record size and historic location distinguish the huge sycamore growing in the city of Fond du Lac. Not only is the tree one of the largest sycamores in the state, but it has the most notable address: 100 South Military Road.

As of 2003, the giant tree had a circumference of 18 feet 4 inches and was nearly 70 feet tall. Since the sycamore is not native to Wisconsin, a specimen this large is a rarity here. Though at one time the tree faced possible removal in a road-widening project, it is now being protected by the city.

The Military Road, laid out by the United States Army from 1832 to 1835, links Fort Crawford in

Prairie du Chien with Fort Winnebago in Portage and Fort Howard in Green Bay. It was the first “real” road in Wisconsin, an alternative to travel by water, and made further settlement of the state possible. The sycamore, which must be close to 200 years old, has been witness to this history.

According to Mr. Nehls, who lived in the house beneath the tree, the sycamore is a handsome presence. It is slow to leaf out in the spring, but by autumn its leaves are the biggest of any around. “When they fall, there is a big pile of them,” he said with understatement.

Sources: Harold Nehls, Fond du Lac
Myron J. Medin, Jr., Fond du Lac
Ruth Worthing, Fond du Lac