

## The Waldo Park redwood



**Editor's note:** While many Oregon trees are 200 years or older, few can lay claim to any bicentennial significance. There are, however, many trees in Oregon which were silent witnesses to historic events or which were planted in commemoration of an event or an ideal.

Some 20 of these trees were identified last year and entered in the American Forestry Association's historic and famous tree contest. The national selections will be published in a book sometime this year.

From time to time, the LOG will feature these historic trees.

There are legends of a buckskin-clad pioneer who roamed about the East and Mid-west planting apple trees.

More to the tradition of the west is the true story of a Salem judge, a traveling seedling salesman and a modern-day traffic stopper.

William Waldo came to the Willamette Valley with his parents from Missouri in 1843. He was early a political animal, joining the Union Party to uphold Lincoln and his ideals; later becoming a Republican.

He was a lawyer, a Marion County judge and a respected member of the Salem community.

Judge Waldo lived along Mill Creek in what is now the center of Salem. To his estate in 1872 came a traveling salesman with a bundle of the most remarkable redwood trees. Not only did the salesman have the unmitigated gall to sell seedlings in a state trying desperately to beat the forest back, he also had the gift of blarney. Judge Waldo and many other Salemites were hooked by his sales pitch and purchased the miracle redwood seedlings.

Waldo planted the tree on the corner of his property, which is now the junction of Union and Summer streets.

As the town of Salem grew, Waldo's estate, once in farmland, succumbed to the Salem metropolis. He sold his land with the stipulation that the redwood, to which he had become attached, be preserved.

A state highway was built just to the east of the tree. The street was paved, then widened, then widened again.

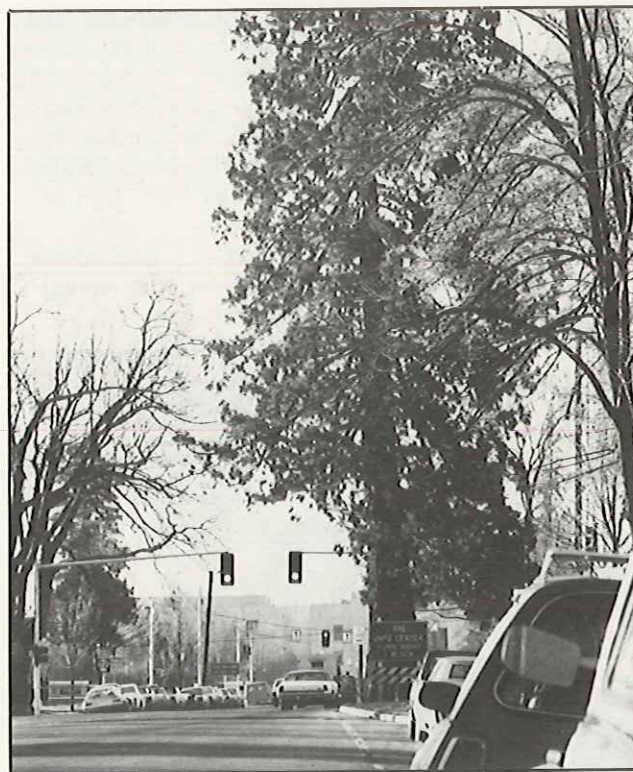
At each widening, the tree faced another crisis. Yet each time, Salem residents took up Judge Waldo's cause (he died in 1911) and insured the tree's preservation.

Finally in 1936, the American War Mothers, supported by many of Salem's leading citizens, succeeded in having the tree and the ground around it dedicated as a city park.

Today the tree stands in the right lane of Summer Street, on a plot 12 feet by 20 feet—just big enough for the tree and a City of Salem "Waldo Park" sign. The tree is 82 feet high and over 6 feet in diameter.

The tree squeezes Summer St., a main arterial, from four lanes to three, then back to four. A new Employment building was recently constructed to the southwest.

In that precarious position it sits, debating whether time or city planners will decide its fate.



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