

TREES IN ANTRIM COUNTY

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FORWARD

I think most of us agree that trees have great value. This value may be expressed in a variety of ways. Many are intrinsic values such as providing aesthetic values, landscape values, and even family values. I can't tell you how many people have showed me a tree their grandparents had planted.

Trees also have economic value. This country was built from wood products provided by trees. Wood production continues to be an important element to our society's economy. The residents of Antrim County have a rich history tied to trees.

The most overlooked value trees offer tends to be their environmental value. Trees play a vital role in protecting our water resources here in Antrim County. They buffer our lakes and streams providing wetland protection, clean air and erosion control. They provide homes and habitat for wildlife.

When I started this project, I thought I would simply compile some of the pictures I took over the years, maybe snap a few new ones with my phone and put them together for a Facebook post or our website just for fun. Once I began thinking about which trees to include, I began to realize that this was more than just a simple project. I began to recollect trees all over the county. Some trees had interesting stories behind them or unique characteristics, some were just tree I noticed driving around. What also became evident was that some were no longer here. Time, insects, weather and other factors took their toll on some of our most unique trees.

There are many trees that have caught my eye over the years. Here are just a few that I found to be unique or just simply beautiful trees.

The following trees have survived logging, fire, insects and diseases, road construction, storms and harsh winters. Take a drive someday and see if you can find a few of these special trees right here in Antrim County.

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Cover Photo: Likely the most unique tree in the county. This is an American chestnut tree that somehow found its way to Antrim County 100 years ago. The American chestnut has all but been wiped out in its natural range due to the chestnut blight that swept through the country in the 1900's. The tree was 33 inches in diameter last time I measured it. A wood working company offered me \$ 10,000.00 for the tree. No sale.

This tree is an outstanding example of an American chestnut. It stands all alone in the Walter Kirkpatrick Forest located on Orchard Hill Road. It is difficult to find, but if you're take a ride on your mountain bike you may spot it.



The Alden Oak trees are two fabulous trees located on First Street in Alden. There is a small hole in one of the trees – seen in photo that houses wild honeybees. The second tree has enough room for a small summer home. At one time the road commission slated these trees to be removed for road improvements. Community activists banded together and stopped the removal of these unique trees.



The Cedar River Natural Area is located east of Bellaire and contains some remnants of the white pine that once existed in the area. Two trees actually stood on this spot at the same time. For some reason the loggers spared one of them.

A walk through the Cedar River Natural Area will introduce you to some unique trees and forest environments. The photo of this tree simply does not do it justice. This tree has had a sign next to it for over thirty years, which many visitors have taken their picture next to.



The pines at the County owned Hawk Lake forest area east of Mancelona contains some of the largest red pine trees in the County. Here trees were planted in 1937 and maintained by the county for the next 80 years. Multiple thinning has occurred in the plantation allowing trees to grow and develop to larger diameters not often seen in this species anymore.

Although I do not remember any individual tree that strikes me – the collection of trees on these 160 acres is worth a look. Trees in excess of 25 inches in diameter can be found.



Many beautiful trees and in fact one of the most beautiful examples of a hardwood forest is located on County owned property at the corner of Ritt Road and Derenzy highway. Although many beautiful trees exist on the property, one of my favorites is one of the sugar maple trees. Not especially unique, it is simply a high valued larger diameter tree. At 28 inches in diameter and over 1000 board feet of veneer quality lumber – the tree would likely fetch a high price should it be cut and sold for lumber.

Right now it is safe from harvest as it is serving as a seed tree responsible for sending out new seedlings into the forest every year.



This beech tree is not actually in Antrim County. I came across this tree when thinning a pine plantation in Kalkaska County. How so many people knew where this tree was and took the time to carve their names in it is a mystery to me. The tree finally fell apart a few years ago.



No one likely notices this tree. It is just past the Alden Lumber south of Alden. It is a Sycamore tree. One of only two I know of in Antrim County. Sycamore is not native to this area but can grow here. This tree was slated for removal by the road commission 10 or so years ago. Its branches were sweeping out into the road causing some hazard to driving. The owner of the tree and the road commission came to a compromise regarding its removal. The road commission agreed to trim the branches reaching over the road.



The Emerald Ash borer took a terrible toll on our ash trees. By now, everyone likely has had an ash tree that died in their yard or on their property. The Emerald ash borer, an invasive pest, killed 25 percent of the trees in the County -yet another tree species disaster. This tree hung on until the end. It was located on the Alden Highway at the intersection of Chapman road. I knew the tree was on its way out, it had been declining for the past several years, but when I went by it on the 21st of July, 2017 there was a tree removal crew there beginning to take the tree down. I felt a quick photo was in order.



Here is a tree we have all driven past many times. It is a white pine on Alba Highway just east of Alba on your way to Gaylord. I can't help but notice this tree every time I go by. Maybe you will now. Nothing special, just found it shape to be interesting.



There is an Elm tree stuck between the Aunt Jane Building and the Bellaire Community Hall. My guess it was planted in 1893 at the time of the Aunt Jane Building was finished. If anyone has some history on this please share. Dutch Elm Disease is a fungus disease that wiped out elm trees across the nation in the 70's. It continues to kill elm trees to this day. Many still remember the Elm trees that lined their streets or had a prominent position in their back yard. There are very few trees that escaped the disease. This tree has somehow survived a poor location and a devastating invasive disease.

