

EERC Tree

From MTU LUG wiki

The EERC Tree (1871?-2010) lived in front of the EERC building. The EERC Tree has regularly won most elections like Winter Carnival Queen, Homecoming Queen, and USG officer positions. Much to the disappointment of those who voted for it, the EERC Tree was never actually allowed to win elections. During the month of April 2003, the EERC Tree was decorated with CDs and other objects in protest of a 98 billion dollar lawsuit against Joe Nievelt by the RIAA. On August 17, 2010, the EERC Tree was cut down. The following letter was published (<http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/today/previous.php?issue=20100818&id=10768&nav=1#2>) as explanation.

The Leaning Tree Comes Down

by John Gagnon, promotional writer

The Leaning Tree, also known as the EERC Tree, was cut down early Tuesday morning, just after dawn. It was ailing, mostly brown instead of green. A big, native white pine, it graced the center of campus for who knows how long.

"We cut it down before it fell down," says John Rovano, director of Facilities.

Rovano says he might have to find someone to coordinate how the wood is used, for the downed tree yielded several logs that are in demand. Rovano says he's receiving requests for using the wood for benches in the Memorial garden; maybe a wood sculpture for the campus; or a decorative element in a fraternity. "It'll have more of a life after it's gone than before," Rovano jests.

He doesn't know whether the tree's location in the middle of the lower campus was "intentional or accidental." But, he adds, "We'll make its replacement a centerpiece."

The Grounds crew, then, will plant another white pine in its place. Facilities will bring water for irrigation and electricity for lighting, perhaps year-round. "We'll do the space some justice," Rovano says.

Forester/Lecturer James Schmierer (SFRES) says the tree is a remnant of extensive stands of large trees in Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota. He calls it "a long-lived species," reaching 300 years and more.

"Anytime you have an isolated tree surrounded by hardscape, it's a challenging environment," he says. Hazard tree removal? "Welcome to the world of urban forestry," he advises. He is gratified that it'll be replaced by another white pine.

He guesses that some people might be disappointed about cutting down this particular pine. (Just check out the Facebook and Twitter accounts to read comments from students and alumni.)

"People get sentimentally attached to big, old trees," he says. "Sometimes the emotions get overwhelming."

He sums up the situation as a balance between safety and visual impact.

"I've walked by that tree many times," he says. "It's a shame to see it go. But I put on my safety hat and I understand. There are people on campus who are responsible for safety. That can involve unpopular decisions, but you can't go against your mandate--your duties."

Over the years the Leaning Tree has garnered votes in queen competitions; it has been the subject of calculations and bets on when it would fall over. It was Tech's own Tower of Pisa.

Its start was modest, its life long, and its end abrupt. Once a landmark, it will now be a hallmark of the passage of time and the cycle of life, something that grew along with the institution. Mark Dion, a 1983 alumnus from Houston, says, "I recall the tree's big beauty. Such is life--an ending and a beginning."

Mike Hyslop (SFRES) has a cross section--called "a cookie"--of the tree. Using software, he will be able to count the rings to within a year or two. The big question: Is the tree as old as Tech?

Stay tuned.

The tree has been dated by Hyslop and is discussed in this article written by John Gagnon: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/today/previous.php?issue=20100909&utm_source=email&utm_content=20100909#1

According to the grounds manager, the tree will be replaced with a 12-13' white pine within a few weeks.

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- This page was last modified on 25 November 2010, at 05:36.
 - This page has been accessed 9,843 times.