

Centuries-old tree dedicated at Arlington preserve

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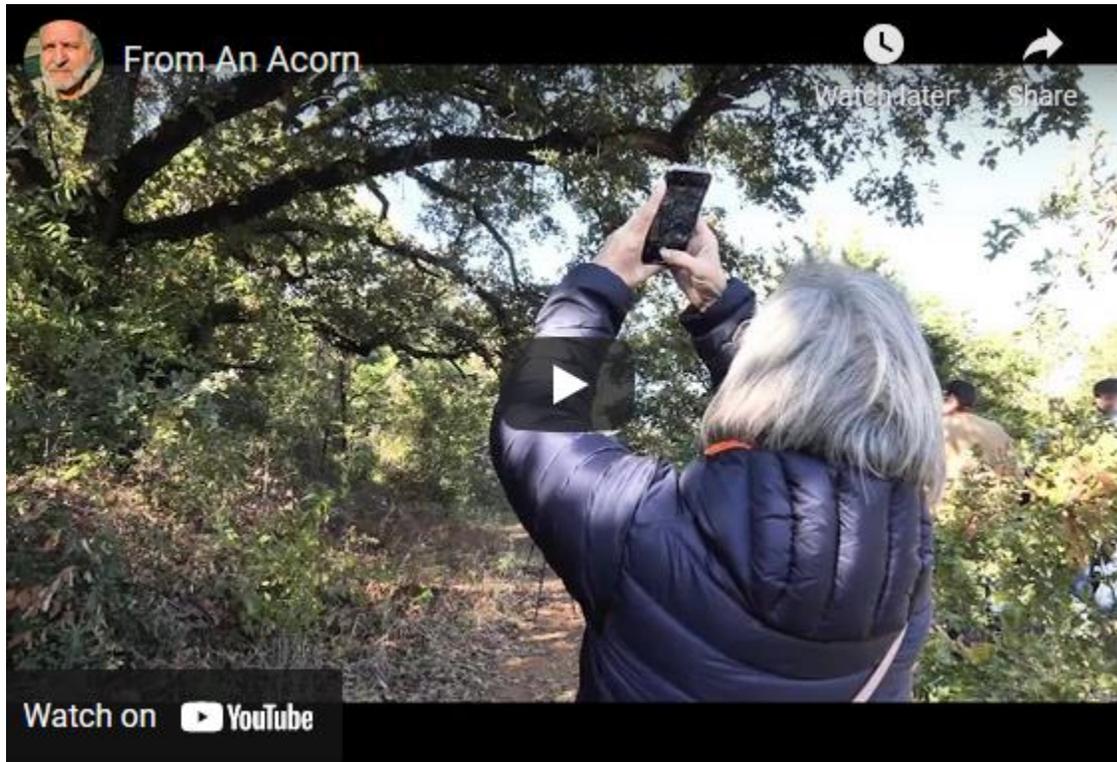
The "Old Caddo Oak" was officially proclaimed a historic tree at Southwest Nature Preserve on Saturday. Photos and videos by J.G. Domke.

A 200-year-old oak tree in Arlington was recently recognized as a historic tree thanks to an intrepid tree lover.

Wes Culwell, a Fort Worth arborist, discovered the old post oak at Southwest Nature Preserve in 2015.

He was preparing to give a presentation on historic trees at a [Friends of Southwest Nature Preserve](#) meeting, when he asked to be shown around the nature area. Located just south of I-20 on

Bowman Springs Road in southwest Arlington, the park has been kept as a wildscape. No soccer fields, just a few picnic tables dot the perimeter of the parking lot, surrounded by rapidly expanding urban sprawl.



Wes Culwell explains the significance of the historic post oak now known as the Old Caddo Oak. Video by J.G. Domke. Link to Video of From An Acorn <https://youtu.be/vEf8zxyScZw>.

The preserve almost became a housing development back in 2004. But the Arlington Parks and Recreation officials and City Council member Sheri Capehart along with residents lobbied to keep it a wildlife refuge. They envisioned a smaller version of [River Legacy Park](#), the 1,300-acre jewel of the Arlington Parks system, located in north Arlington.

Today, the 58-acre park attracts fly fisherman who enjoy the spring fed lake and three ponds. For Culwell, it was a nice place for a hike through the woods. Then he saw it.

A post oak next to the trail was surrounded by overgrown brush. But Culwell could see by the size of the trunk and huge branches here was an old tree. He suggested contacting the [Texas Historic Tree Coalition](#), a tree advocacy group based in Dallas.



Jim

Frisinger hugs the tree now known as the Old Caddo Oak.

Southwest Arlington resident Jim Frisinger and SWNP volunteers took on the challenge and after four years of research, the venerable post oak now has a name, “Old Caddo Oak.” It was dedicated as a historic Texas tree on Saturday.

“Now we have another important feature for the preserve,” Frisinger said.

The tree sits atop a hill among a unique mix of east Texas plants, such as the Glen Rose Yucca, not found anywhere else this far west. Rising 100 feet overlooking the plains, the spot is rumored to have been the perfect location for Caddo, Cherokee and Tonkawas tribes to send smoke signals and survey for buffalo.

And the Old Caddo Oak was even there back then.

Mary Ann Graves, president of Texas Historic Tree Coalition, is happy to make it the first tree to be chosen by the group in Tarrant County.

“The process isn’t instant,” Graves says. “The coalition pulls together anthropologists, arborists, historians and communities where the trees are, so it takes time to pull a story together.”

She said the Friends of Southwest Nature Preserve have done an “amazing job.”

“We’re grateful to the people at the Southwest Nature Preserve for bringing this tree to our attention. They’re the heroes of this story.”



Link to the Video of Old Caddo Oak <https://youtu.be/oupNqeQHMDw> Mary Ann Graves of Texas Historic Tree Coalition at the historic tree designation on Saturday.

The dedication on Saturday tied in with the sixth anniversary of the opening of the park. Isolated and sandwiched between Arlington and the City of Kennedale, the natural area has been popular since the 1950s with youth who liked to hang-out at “Kennedale Mountain.”

Today, the Friends of Southwest Nature Preserve meet monthly to learn about Texas wildlife and maintain a [website](#) and [Facebook page](#). A steering committee coordinates nature walks, bird counts, along with helping the Fort Worth Fly Fishers take advantage of the preserve.

“New species are found all the time that exist nowhere else in Tarrant County,” wrote Frisinger in the Historic Tree Nomination. “The 58 acres continue to harbor a lot of secrets.”

Graves was impressed by the efforts of the Friends group.

“It’s easy to see they love this land and their community,” she said. “Most visitors will never know the people who’ve worked so hard to make it a beautiful place, and to tell the story of those who have walked here for generations. It’s a good thing and it will bless generations to come.”

<https://greensourcedfw.org/articles/centuries-old-tree-honored-arlington-preserve>



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J.G. Domke was raised in Greeley Colorado, where he looked forward to Sunday trips to Rocky Mountain National Park. A journalist who likes telling the story in words and pictures, he has worked at numerous newspapers around the country. He is now based in Arlington, where there is lots of sun and no fear of getting stuck in the snow. Contact him at jim.domke@gmail.com.

