

Big Mulberry Tree Felled, Slices Presented To Mayor And Former Owner

by Frances Jacobs

The large mulberry tree that stood north of Cemetery Rd. on the empty lot in front of the Kroger Store was cut down last Monday and slices presented to Mrs. Floyd A. Miller, 3611 Heywood Dr., and Mayor Roger Reynolds.

Mrs. Miller is the former Mary Weaver whose parents owned the land on which the Hilliard Plaza Shopping Center is being developed at the northwest corner of Leap and Cemetery Rds. Now a senior citizen, Mrs. Miller reports that the mulberry tree stood in the yard of their family home ever since she can remember, and it was always big. She recalls having a swing on it from the time she was three or four years old.



Present last week when the large mulberry tree north of Cemetery Rd. near Leap Rd. was cut were, from left, Dave Quinn, in charge of facility engineering for Kroger; Hilliard Mayor Roger Reynolds; Mrs. Floyd Miller whose childhood memories include a swing from the largest limb; and Tom Denison from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC).

The tree was referred to as Ohio's biggest mulberry tree in an April, 1964 column by Ben Hayes in the Citizen Journal. He found the listing in a booklet called "Ohio's Biggest Trees" and put out by the State Forestry Association.

In June of 1964, Edna Ingham, in her column entitled "All Around Town" which ran in the Hilliard newspaper that preceded the Northwest News, also referred to it as Ohio's largest mulberry tree, with an 85-foot spread, an 11-foot diameter, and three limbs. Mrs. Ingham referred to the fact that it was on Mrs. James H. Weaver's property and noted that it was a male tree and had never produced any fruit.

A state forester called out by the Northwest News to measure the tree in August of 1981 again reported that it was the largest in Ohio, but noted that it was in very poor condition with a decaying interior being held together with steel rods at a couple of points.

Mrs. Miller recalls that her mother had one set of rods put in in about the 1940's.

Officials of Kroger on whose property the tree stood decided to cut it

down after a large section fell off a few weeks ago, splitting the trunk and causing the rest of the huge tree to lean precariously toward BancOhio which is located on the adjoining lot to the east.

When the tree was cut down, still more rods were found holding the trunk together and a closer look indicated that it might have started out as several trees which grew together.

Mrs. Miller, ever the historian, would like to have an official count of the rings to ascertain how old the tree was. She is guessing that it was at least as old as the house which stood on the property and was built about 1885. But it could easily have been much older, she believes. The mulberry is a native tree found growing wild and is not one which was commonly chosen for yard planting, which leaves one open to the speculation that the house may have been placed in that location because there was a nice shade tree already located there.

Mrs. Miller thinks it would be interesting to get some kind of scientific opinion of the tree's age and then trace its history through events

which may have taken place in its territory - - maybe starting with an Indian tepee and going all the way through the years to the shopping center.

Mrs. Miller said she hasn't decided yet what she will do with her slice of the tree, but putting a plaque on it and presenting it to the Northwest Historical Society of which she is secretary is a possibility.

The tree's memory will be preserved in the Cardinal Apartments which will be constructed east of Leap Rd., opposite the shopping center, in early 1984. They will be called Mulberry Apartments of Hilliard, and it is possible that Cardinal, which has beautifully landscaped facilities, will work a chunk of the tree into the landscaping.