

If a Tree Falls...

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There's an old stone farmhouse along Mosserville Road in Lynn Township, in the northern Lehigh County, and along side of it, is one of those oddities that make people stop and stare.



The Sycamore Tree on Mosserville Road in Lynn Township

Yes, I'm referring to that sycamore tree. Drive along that road, you certainly cannot miss it. It's said to have the girth of a two-car garage.



I haven't found much documented history of this tree, but the amount of lore that surrounds it, is almost as big as the tree itself.

One folklore has it, that a long time ago, a man on horseback stuck the sycamore switch he used as a riding crop into the ground near the stream and up sprouted this enormous sycamore tree.



The oldest living tree in Lehigh County?

Neighbors and other people living in the area have passed down many other stories from earlier times. They describe Indian rituals supposedly performed around it and hangings that were conducted from its thick limbs. Still, nothing of its age or history can be known with certainty.

The American sycamore is a massive tree and can attain the largest trunk diameter of any of the Eastern U.S. hardwoods. Living sycamore trees can reach ages of five hundred to six hundred years.

At one point, it reached an estimated 100 feet into the sky, stretching 180 feet across and 23 feet thick at the trunk, and still today, the sycamore still stands.

Donald Heintzelman, founder of the Wildlife Information Center, estimates the tree may be close to 500 years old, which means it already would have been an old tree when the first European settlers moved to the area in the late 1700s.

Indeed, Heintzelman believes the tree might be the oldest living thing in Lehigh County.

But it's old age is showing on this giant sycamore. The leaves it does sprout are sparse and deformed. The tree, and hundreds like it all over southeastern Pennsylvania, is most likely suffering from an acute case of a disease called anthracnose.

Anthracnose is a spore-borne fungus that attacks the leaves and twigs of sycamores and some other deciduous trees. In some instances, anthracnose can kill a tree.

So, it's time to stop and smell the roses, or in this case, see the sycamore tree on Mosserville Road.

Remember it and keep passing it's tales on to the next generation.