

## History of the Oak Landscape

The history of the Genesee Oaks goes back hundreds of years, when the Seneca Indians were the main inhabitants of the Genesee Valley. The Seneca Indians cleared land for hunting and growing crops. They then used periodic burning to maintain hunting clearings. These burnings left the scattered 'Oak openings' seen today with their broad and heavy trunked trees, most of which are more than 200 years old.

Oak species exhibit physiological adaptations that facilitate their survival in areas exposed to fire. These adaptations include thick bark, sprouting ability, resistance to rotting and scarring, and fire-created acorn germination. This allowed large, open grown Oaks to flourish in areas burned by the Seneca, where other species could not.

Upon settling the area, the Wadsworth family continued to act as stewards of the Oak trees for generations, beginning with the brothers James and William Wadsworth. The brothers stipulated that one shade tree be left per 2 acres of leased land, thus saving the Genesee Oaks from the pioneers' axes.

The Oak trees were left standing because they provided valuable shade for livestock and did not interfere with agricultural practices in the Valley. The Oaks also created an American version of a picturesque English landscape that the Wadsworths valued and still enjoy today.

## Present Day

Grazing and mowing are used today to maintain the open fields around the Oak trees. However, these methods do not allow Oak trees to regenerate in open conditions as fire once allowed them to. The risk is that when the present trees die, there will be no new Oak trees to take their place - unless something is done.

Some landowners have taken an interest in preserving this unique and historical landscape for future generations by planting Oak trees in their fields, so that one day, these trees will be as large and impressive as the trees seen on this tour.

This second edition Oak Tree Driving Tour is a joint presentation of APOG and GVC. These non-profit organizations depend on contributions to help fund their respective community projects. Thank you for your support.

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### *Association for the Preservation of Genesee (APOG)*

The purpose of the Association for the Preservation of Genesee is to preserve, improve, and restore the places of civic, architectural, and historic interest to Genesee, New York and to educate members of the community to their architectural and historical heritage. Additional aims and purposes are to encourage others to contribute their knowledge, advice, and financial assistance.

[www.geneseeapog.com](http://www.geneseeapog.com)

APOG

P.O. Box 294

Genesee, NY 14454

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### *Genesee Valley Conservancy (GVC)*

Working "to protect the habitat, open space and farmland of the Genesee Valley region," GVC partners with private landowners to conserve properties that contain rural and natural values that contribute to our community's character. GVC also owns land as nature preserve to enhance habitat and provide public access to natural areas.

[www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org](http://www.geneseevalleyconservancy.org)

(585) 243-2190

GVC

P.O. Box 73

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### *Special Thanks*

- Jon Hoose; Student, SUNY Genesee.
- Benjamin Gajewski; Stewardship Director, GVC.
- David S. Robertson; Associate Professor of Geography, SUNY Genesee, "*The Genesee Valley: Oak Ecology and Land Use on the Developer's Frontier*" (2007).

## Scenic Oak Tree Driving Tour

*Presented by:*

Association for the Preservation of Genesee (APOG)  
and the Genesee Valley Conservancy (GVC)



This driving tour highlights many of the magnificent Oak trees of the Genesee Valley. While most of these trees are on private property, they are visible from public roads. There are several locations highlighted in this guide that are accessible to the public. We invite you to stop at these locations and take a walk up close to see these Oak trees.

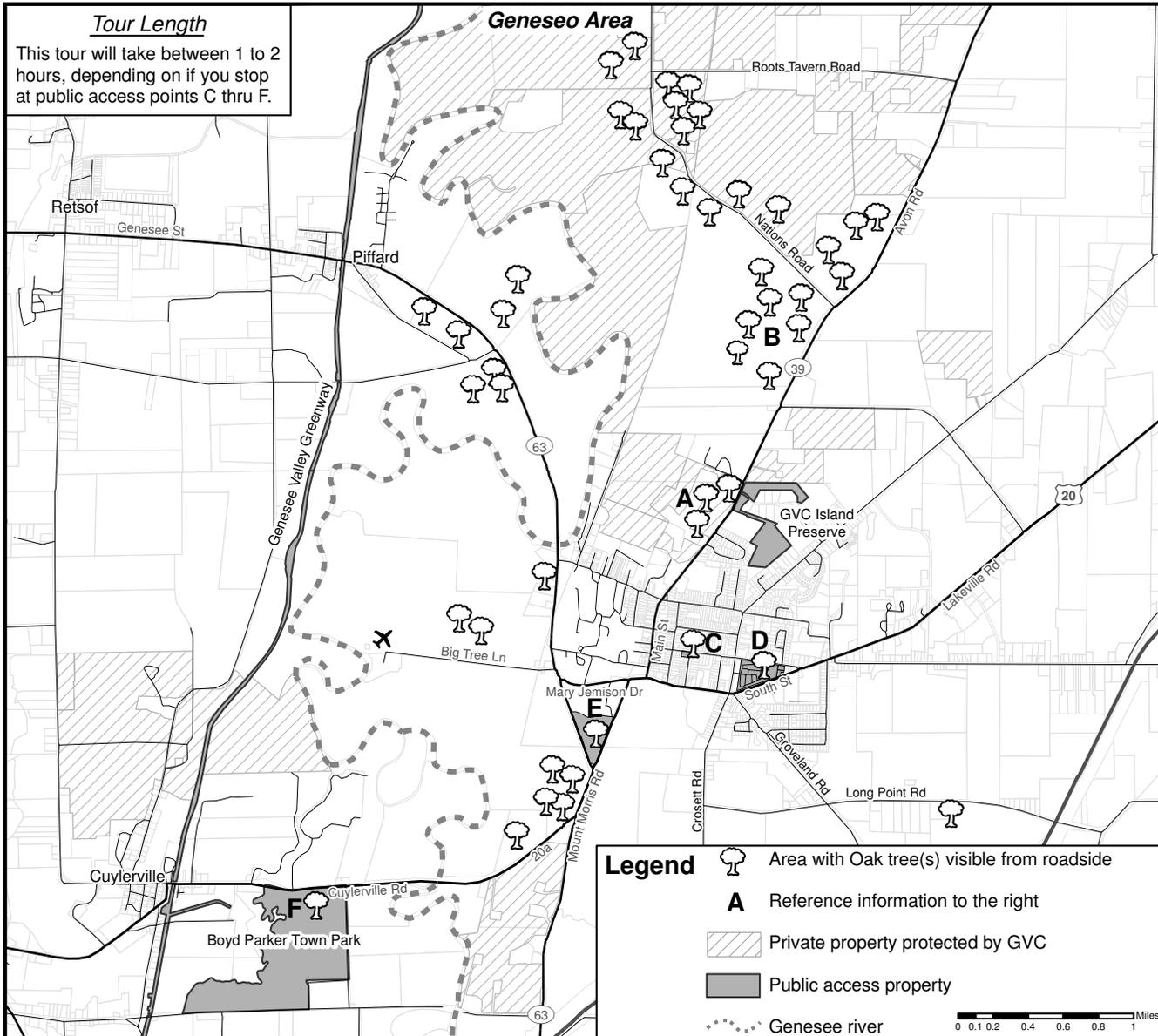
Genesee is fortunate to have two organizations working to preserve and enhance our community. The Association for the Preservation of Genesee works within the Village to preserve the historic qualities and image of the Village. In 1991, the Village received national distinction by being named to the National Historic Landmark registry.

The Genesee Valley Conservancy has a presence both in the Village and in the surrounding regions working to conserve the important open space resources that contribute to the scenic beauty and habitat quality of our area.

Together these organizations are working to maintain the quality of life in Genesee for future generations.

### Tour Length

This tour will take between 1 to 2 hours, depending on if you stop at public access points C thru F.



### Start at the fountain on Main Street, Geneseo

- Head North on Route 39 - 2.2 miles (see A and B)
- Turn left onto Nations Road - 1.8 miles (see B)
- Turn right onto Roots Tavern Road - 1.7 miles
- Turn right onto Route 39, back to Geneseo - 3.7 miles
- Turn left onto Center Street (at fountain) - .2 miles (see C)
- Continue up Center turning right onto Temple Hill - .3 mi (see D)
- Continue on Temple Hill turning right onto Route 20A - 2mi
- Veer left, staying on 20A - .8 miles (see E)
- Veer right, staying on Route 20A - 2.4 miles (see F)
- Return on 20A, back towards Geneseo - 2.1 miles
- Veer left onto Route 63 heading to Piffard - 3.5 miles
- Turn around in Piffard, head back on Route 63 - 2.2 miles
- Turn left onto Court Street - .6 miles
- Turn right onto Main Street to conclude the tour

#### A - Hartford House property

Built by James S. Wadsworth in 1835 this property is one of the oldest residential structures in Geneseo

#### B - Oneida Lot

These trees are featured in the painting "Genesee Oaks" by Asher B. Durand, which hangs in the Rochester Memorial Art Gallery.

#### C - County Museum, 30 Center St. - PUBLIC ACCESS

The museum shed (behind museum) contains a section of the original 'Big Tree' on display. The museum has a limited season and hours.

#### D - Temple Hill Cemetery - PUBLIC ACCESS

Park on the road and walk along the cemetery paths to view various Oak trees.

#### E - SUNY Geneseo Arboretum - PUBLIC ACCESS

Park in South Village Lot V & head south to the Arboretum sign. Walk along trails to view many large Oak trees.

#### F - Boyd and Parker Memorial Park - PUBLIC ACCESS

See the infamous 'torture tree' that was once surrounded by the Seneca village, Little Beard's Town. This town was destroyed by General John Sullivan's campaign, during the Revolutionary War in 1779. Young soldiers were tortured and killed beside this tree by Senecas in retaliation for their town's destruction.