

Attention: Lifestyle/Travel/Consumer/Garden Editors, Photo Editors, Calendar Editors

MEDIA ADVISORY

Local Landmark Tree Accepted to National Register

Nonprofit conservation organization, American Forests, recognizes local tree as historic.

WHAT: The western red cedar tree located at the Eagledale ferry landing has been accepted to the National Register of Historic Trees, following a nomination submitted by Bill McKnight and the greater Japanese-American community of Bainbridge Island, Washington. The World War II Nikkei Exclusion Memorial is under consideration as a national memorial by the National Park System, an effort sponsored by Rep. Jay Inslee (D-Bainbridge Island).

"This grand tree is not only a living witness to a sad day in American history when constitutional rights were ignored and our nation banished Japanese Americans to concentration camps, but it is also a fitting and lasting symbol of the strength of these patriotic people who, even in the face of losing their freedom, fought and died for our country and never lost their love and loyalty for America," said Inslee.

On March 30, 1942, 227 men, women and children from Bainbridge Island, Washington were assembled and escorted by armed U.S. Army soldiers to the Eagledale ferry landing. Only allowed to bring what they could carry or wear, they passed military cordons and a western red cedar tree before boarding a ferry, leaving their island home in the heart of Puget Sound. They sailed to Seattle, where they were loaded onto trains for a three-day journey that would take them to the Manzanar concentration camp in California's Mojave Desert.

The Bainbridge Islanders' only crime was being Nikkei – people of Japanese ancestry. More than two thirds of them were U.S. citizens by birth, with the elders forbidden by federal laws to become citizens. Bainbridge Island's Nikkei community was the first mass exclusion of more than 120,000 Japanese-Americans to be forcibly removed from their homes on the West Coast and experience three years of imprisonment. Not all were imprisoned. Some were unjustly arrested, some moved away and others served in the U.S. military, but all were forbidden to remain.

In October and November of 1941, Special Representative of the State Department Curtis B. Munson, under instruction from President Franklin Roosevelt, carried out an intelligence gathering investigation on the loyalty of Japanese Americans. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the West Coast was declared a theater of war and on February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, setting in motion the forced removal of Japanese Americans. Six days later, on February 25, 1942, a group of Japanese Americans was removed from Terminal Island near Los Angeles and then on March 18, 1942, President Roosevelt created the War Relocation Authority. On March 24, 1942, Civilian Exclusion Order Number One was issued for Bainbridge Island, directing 45 Japanese American families that within one week they would be removed to concentration camps.

The World War II Nikkei Exclusion Memorial Committee western red cedar tree, located at the site of the historic Eagledale ferry landing, can be seen in several wartime photographs. Today the tree consists of four trunks with a total diameter of 276 inches, a spread of 54 feet and an

estimated age of 100 years. It has been declared a Historic Tree by American Forests, and shall tell its tale as a witness to human suffering in the National Register of Historic Trees.

VISUALS: Photo available via email.

WHO: AMERICAN FORESTS (www.americanforests.org), founded in 1875, is the nation's oldest nonprofit conservation organization and the world leader in tree-planting for environmental restoration. Since 1917, AMERICAN FORESTS has recognized trees as living witnesses to the events and lives that shaped our nation. The group began this work as a preservation program and has continued to update and catalog old trees in five publications, the most recent being in 1975; Famous & Historic Trees, (Clepper and Randall.)

AMERICAN FORESTS is conducting the search for historic trees across the nation. Executive Director, Deborah Gangloff, PhD, said, "Every tree nominated represents a community's respect for the past and it's pride for these environmental treasures."

With Magellan™ Global Positioning equipment provided by Magellan Corporation, the latitude and longitude of each historic tree location is recorded. Future plans include a Historic Trees Eco-tour guided by these GPS locators.

Beginning in 1989, direct offspring historic trees have been grown at the Historic Tree Nursery facilities in Jacksonville, FL. These are available to schools, organizations and individuals and each purchase aids efforts to reforest ecosystems and habitats.

WHEN: Crown Publishing, a division of Random House, will publish the National Register of Historic Trees, the first comprehensive reference of trees with historic significance, in 2005.

WHY: Across the nation, trees stand as the last living witnesses to lives and events that shaped American history. These grand old trees shaded Native Americans before the first European settlers landed; gave protection to the Minutemen during the opening shots of the Revolution; survived the battles of the Civil War and stood as landmarks for pioneers heading westward. Each tree has a place in history and the National Register of Historic Trees will recognize, preserve and protect them for future generations.

ACTION: Individuals, historic societies, civic groups and students are invited to nominate trees to the National Register of Historic Trees online at www.historictrees.org or by requesting a nomination form at 1-800 320-TREE (8733).

Contact: **AMERICAN FORESTS Historic Tree Nursery**
Susan Corbett, (904) 765-0727, Fax: (904) 768-4630
scorbett@historictrees.org

A complete listing of AMERICAN FORESTS' Historic Trees is available at www.historictrees.org